OUT OF THE ASHES

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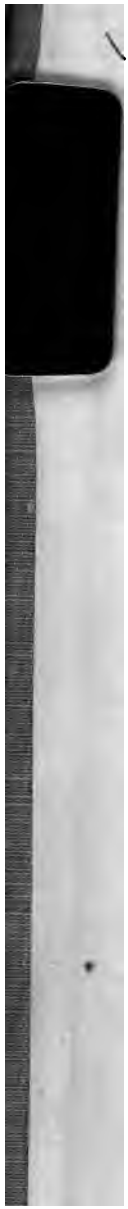

Out *of the* Ashes

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A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF DIVORCE

By

HARNEY RENNOLDS

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CHAPTER I

"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

"But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."—1 Cor. vii.

"OUR city is behind none in the recognition she gives the distinguished pianist we have with us," said Gertrude Curtman, as she sat with her husband and aunt at the dinner table. "The compliments paid him in both the morning and evening papers are enough to turn his head. Suppose, Morrison, that you take Aunt Katherine and me to hear him tonight?"

"Oh, don't bother about me," interrupted Mrs. Bramlet. "I can hear him when I go home—he'll likely be in New Orleans during the season."

"Well, I can't go to-night anyway," answered Curtman. "It would be impossible now to get seats, and besides, I have an engagement that I must keep—to meet some business men at the hotel." As he spoke, he busied himself with the quail on his plate.

"Oh, well, it's of no consequence," said Gertrude. "We can go some other evening; he's here several, I believe."

Morrison gave more than usual care to his dress that night, lingered longer before the mirror than was his wont, then hastened off to keep his engagement. He had scarcely closed the door behind him, before Willie Gilbert came in from his home next door, bringing, with his mother's compliments, tickets for that night's concert. Mr. Gilbert had purchased them the day before, but they had found at this late hour that they could not use them. Gertrude and the Gilberts were long-time friends, making frequent inter-

change of like courtesies, and the tickets were gladly accepted.

While Gertrude and Mrs. Bramlet were making some changes in their dress, other hasty preparations were being made for an evening out. Eliza Jane, the cook, was stirring around in her department with more than usual briskness, getting things in ship-shape before her departure.

Eliza Jane was a privileged character in the household, having been, as she expressed it, "born in the famb'ly," and entitled, she believed, to her share in its emoluments and honors, bound under all circumstances to loyalty and faithfulness, and to give, when occasion so required, her sympathy and tears—sometimes her advice.

To-night she was utilizing Didama, her brother Jerry's wife, who had stopped by en route to a social function. It was Eliza Jane's settled principle to make of use in her domestic

economy whatever material might come to hand, and Didama was at present the material that had come to hand.

There was on the tapis this evening a "pay party," or "soceybul," being given in Fraternity Hall by the chapter to which they both belonged, to attend which, Eliza Jane had bent her energies since early morn.

"Gim'me a liff, Didamy, an' I'll go wid you to de soceybul."

"Course I'll give you a liff, Lizerjane," replied Didama. "Doan kno' wharr my manner's gone; I never thot off'ern when I see you in sich hurry——"

"Oh, I ain't kerrin' fer yer manners; you jest tie that apr'n roun' yer wase, ef'til reach. Tite fit? I thot so. Yes, I wanter see how Mrs. Cunnin'ham runnin' dat soceybul—ef she kno' how. They been goin' on four nites now, two las' week an' two this week; but that ain't no sign they goin' on *rite*."

"I ain't bin, so I can't tell," replied Didama, briskly, "but I mistrust ef she *do* kno' how. I doan think she got hedd enuf fer that."

"Hedd enuf? Yer doan want her to have no more hedd'n she's got, duz you? She's got the big hedd now."

"It's big enuf on the outside, but I doan kno' how big 'tis in the inside."

Here they both stopped and enjoyed heartily a laugh at their friend's expense.

"Well, Mrs. Cunnin'ham *think* she kno' how to run it," resumed Eliza Jane.

"Mrs. Cunnin'ham think she kno' how to run ev'ything," replied Didama; "she jest soon'ez not try to drive Blueblood down the bullyvard."

"I'd hate to be in the road when she tryin' drive Blueblood; can't nobody drive him but Miss'er Cu'tman and C'lumbus."

"I b'lieve you! Jerre say he wouldn't try

to drive that hoss ef Mr. Cu'tman wuz to give him to him."

"I doan blame him. I wouldn't nuther. But Miss'er Cu'tman an' Miss Gertrue serten do look putty flyin' 'long behine him, Blue-blood a-steppin' 'long like he wuz too proud to tech the grown, an' his hedd up in the arr."

"Nother thing, Lizerjane," said Didama, harking back to the party, "I wants to see ef they's got my name on that turke I sent 'em. I doan want 'em to get them turkes mixed up an' put my name on some ole haff-dun gob'ler, whut look like it wuz cooked in de moonlite stidier in a stove. Mine wuz as brown as a doornut an' full o' good stuffin', an' gravy all roun' it."

"Hush, nigger, you make my mouff water. When I gits tharr I'm suttenly goin' to eat some uv *your* turke. You sho' do kno' how to cook a turke. Well," she continued, "I didn't give 'em nuthin' this time ceptin' a cake. Miss

Gertrue tole me, jest go on an make me one 'long with the one I wuz makin' fur home here; one uv them marble spice cakes. It's the onlyest cake Miss'er Cu'tman eats, an' Miss Gertrue, you kno', allers wants me to cook whut he likes."

"Miss Gertrue is suttenly a clever 'oman. It looks like a pity dat en'ybody be mean to *her*."

"I rekin it would. I duz my bes' fur her. I cook the bes' I kin, an' looks after things an' doan waste nuthin'. I tries to be es good to her es she is to me."

"Oh, tharr ain't nuthin' matter with *you*, Lizerjane; *you* does yer part. Ev'ybody know that."

There was a pause in the conversation, during which there was an increased rattling of cups and saucers, as the women hastened through their task, Eliza Jane spurred on by the recurring contemplation of the toothsome

turkey, and Didama by an eagerness to place those labels where they *belonged* on the donations!

But Didama had been carrying along, during the pause, an unbroken train of thought.

"Say, Lizerjane, does that Mrs. Landray come 'bout heyr much?"

"No; I ain't seen her 'bout heyr fer long time."

"Well, I'm glad uv it. I doan like that 'oman's ways."

"I never did like the way she look. You kno', Didamy, we niggers kin tell jest by lookin' at people whether dey's disrespectable er not: we kin tell a heap quicker'n white folks."

"Of course we kin. An' what business she got settin' out on her porch a-talkin' to gen'lmen when her pore old husben's sick, off to hisself. Of course I doan kno' nuthin' agin her, an' fur be it frum me to make up a lie to tell on her. I ain't that kine; but when I pass

tharr uv nights an' see her a-laffin' an' talkin' with other people's husbens I think she better be tendin' to her own."

"You suttenly got dat idee right."

"It's jest like Jerre say tho'; he say they ain't marryin' fur better or worse these days, that it's all fer better—that they marry fer better or *better.* He say ef a man gits sick or ole, or eny kine uv worse cum long, the marryin' busts up."

"Brur Jerre's right," laughed Eliza Jane.

"Yes," continued Didama, "uv nights as I go pas' tharr I always slows up to see whut's goin' on, an' tharr she is a-chattin' away like a young ladey with her beaux. All uv em laffin' an' talkin' an' drinkin' lem'nade."

"Lem'nade! I bet it's champoo'."

"Maybe 'tiz champoo—I never thot 'bout that. Wimen like her jest as lief drink champoo as not. Yes," she continued after her return from the butler's pantry, where she had

deposited the silver she had been brightening, "ef I wuz ter tell you the names uv *some* folks I see tharr you wouldn't b'lieve me."

"Who you see, Didamy?"

"I doan kno' bout callin' names. Jerre done teach me to be very partick'ler 'bout that; he say ef you *tell* enything doan tell the names long with it, an' ef you tell the *names* doan tell nuthin' 'bout em."

"That iz fust rate way to do ginner'ly, but when you tell *me* enything it's same as throwin' somethin' in a well. You never will heyr 'bout it no mo'."

Didama walked over to where Eliza Jane was standing, and after glancing toward the door, to assure herself no third party had entered, leaned over and whispered a name in her ear.

"Didamy!" exclaimed Eliza Jane, "Is that a fac'? My! My! an' Miss Gertrue do love that man so! Pore Miss Gertrue—no

wonder she look porely an' bin grievin' so! I spec' somebody gone an' tole her."

"It warn't me; ef she never foun' it out till I tole her she'd never kno'."

CHAPTER II

"Like dumb beast branded by an iron white
With heat, she turned in blind and helpless flight,
But then remembered, and with piteous face came back.
Since then the world has nothing missed
In her, in voice or smile. But she——"

It was a large and fashionable audience that had gathered in the theater, and Mrs. Bramlet and Mrs. Curtman, who arrived late, had barely time to settle themselves in their seats before the appearance on the stage of the distinguished artist.

Their seats were in an inconspicuous part of the building, in the rear, under the balcony. "But they are very good for a concert," Gertrude remarked to her aunt; "we can hear well enough, and we do not care so much to see."

"Or to be seen," interrupted Mrs. Bramlet, "as I'm your escort. You know you would

not object to a more conspicuous place if you were in full dress and your husband with you."

Mrs. Curtman laughed assent. "You are good at guessing, Aunt Katherine. I do like seats nearer the front when Morrison is with me—he's such an elegant escort, and looks so handsome in evening dress! I wish he could have come with us to-night."

But Morrison *was* there, handsome and elegant, as she had said—there with Mrs. Landray.

This Gertrude discovered shortly after the rendering of the first number. They, too, were in inconspicuous seats, not far in front of those occupied by her and her aunt.

The concert now, to her, was over, the artist's melodies all gone, and he himself no more than a wire-worked puppet banging on the keys before him.

The blood came hot to her cheeks and brow, only to recede and leave them white and rigid.

Her lips moved as if she would speak, but the words that came to them she held back, concentrating all senses in her eyes, and these were fixed upon her husband and his partner. Their slightest turn or gesture was not unnoted, as they, too, unmindful of the artist's skill, sat rapt in each other, oblivious of her and the world around them.

But Gertrude's eyes at last refused the task imposed—the lights grew dim; the house swam before her, a jumbled mass of glare and gloom; the music became a far-off, smothered discord, and with it all there came a faintness at her heart.

"I am ill, Aunt Katherine," she said at length; "you must take me home."

Mrs. Bramlet was not surprised; she, too, had seen the pantomime and wondered that Gertrude could stay so long.

"Yes, at the ending of this number," she replied; and utilizing the confusion of ap-

plause that followed on its close, they covered with it their retreat.

The homeward drive was not what Mrs. Bramlet had expected. She had already on her lips many a word in which to voice her anger, but waited wisely for license from her niece, which license was not granted. Gertrude said nothing, and Mrs. Bramlet could but honor such silence with her own. On reaching home she went with Gertrude to the library.

"I will retire early, to-night," she said moving toward the door. She glanced over her shoulder at Gertrude's sad, unhappy face. "Ah, child," she said as she climbed the stairs "your friends thought this—you thought it, too, but have bravely suffered on in silence."

As Gertrude sat awaiting Curtman's coming, all the innuendoes she had ignored, the suspicions she had scorned, came trooping back from their hiding, making more keen her present pain.

Especially the occurrence of a month ago returned with insistent vividness—she lived it over now in all its cruel clearness: Morrison sat in the library, reading some letters he had brought unopened from his business house; she following, loitered at the bookcase at his back, reading, and in the stillness he forgot her presence. She walked to the chair in which he was sitting; the light fell full on the open letter in his hand.

"This is a woman's writing, Morrison," she said, laying her hand on the letter. "Whose is it?"

He rose and caught it from her with self-condemning haste, his face crimson from throat to brow.

"What does all this mean, Morrison? Why cannot I read the letter? I am your wife!"

She recalled now how fiercely he said, "I will not be treated as an idiot—watched as if I were a child!"

"I have not watched you, as if you were a child, nor treated you as if you were an idiot, nor have I set an espionage upon you. It would have been beneath me—it would have been treachery!"

"Treachery or not, it shall not be," he said, and tearing the letter into fragments laid it on the fire. . . .

With her face buried in her hands, she was still sitting, when her husband came home, where Mrs. Bramlet left her.

She tried to be calm. She had said over and over to herself what she intended saying to him when he came. But in doing this, she had presupposed his replies; they were by no means the ones she had expected, and so the interview got out of the groove she had planned. She was a woman of amiable nature, but strength of character as well; and though of a disposition that ignored trifles, had no lack of anger when she had cause.

The interview was stormy; but in thinking of it afterward, she could not recall a word she was not justified in saying.

The following morning, Morrison, breakfasting long before his usual hour, went immediately to his business house.

"I am going home with you, Aunt Katherine, for a while," Gertrude said—"my—heart—is—broken: I must go somewhere and think—creep off like poor wounded things do when they—die."

"Indeed you shall go home with me," Mrs. Bramlet replied, clasping her to her heart—"indeed you shall—I don't want you to stay another day under the roof with that vil——"

"Oh! no, Aunt Katherine," she interrupted, putting out her hand with a deprecating gesture—"don't say that—I can't hear him abused!"

Curtman looked very unapproachable, and was altogether silent at luncheon, almost ig-

noring the necessary courtesies of the table. His wife was not present.

"I am going to take Gertrude home with me," Mrs. Bramlet said as they rose from the table. "I think the journey will do her good —and anyway, she will be better off in New Orleans than—here." . . .

The sunny air and change of scene would doubtless have been good for Gertrude had she been ill. But she was not ill in body, only numbed in brain and wounded at heart.

Among her needs *she* did not reckon southern suns and balmy air, but yielding to the pleading of her aunt, went with her to New Orleans, the quaint old city that had been her home once, and held for her now many a dream-like memory of her childhood.

Mrs. Bramlet in an unobtrusive way did all she could for Gertrude's pleasure. She took her on long drives through the suburbs, and on boat rides on the lake; they explored the old

Creole sections, and together ransacked curio shops. But she was not insistent on any special method, nor did she hamper Gertrude in choosing her diversions. She encouraged her in all healthful occupation of her time and thoughts; her interest in the mission schools; the children's hospital, and helpful visits to the poor. And then, too, she let her stay much by herself and think, wisely forbearing to weary her with questions or to pry into her plans.

And so smoothly was life moving on in this settled grove, that she had begun to think it was all coming out right, or rather as she wished, that Gertrude was learning to forget; ignoring *hope,* that more than stimulant, that iron tonic for the fainting heart; for Gertrude, wherever she went, bore about with her the hope that she had not lost Morrison, that he would still come back and—somehow their trouble would be healed.

How little was she then prepared for that which one day reached her, the formal, legal document of divorce.

She read them over, the cruel words, again and again—to herself and then aloud, to be sure they were there before her, and were not a figment of her feverish brain.

She was dazed and speechless for a while. Her face was white with suffering, and her eyes full of anguish. But there came a look into them that had never been there before.

"I shall not contest it," she said, "he shall have his way. . . . It is his deed—and it is done."

"The villain!" ejaculated Mrs. Bramlet—"the villain!"

Gertrude again put out her hand with the deprecating gesture; but Mrs. Bramlet did not see fit to regard it, and kept on with the tirade that had long been pent up in her bosom.

But the tirade was lost on Gertrude, who had buried her face in her hands and given way to a burst of tears. . . .

The following day they were both calmer.

"I want you to live with me, Gertrude," said Mrs. Bramlet; "you know that this is no invitation from my lips. I want you always—here in my home; if I had but the barest pittance, I would gladly share it with you."

"I believe all this, Aunt Katherine, every word that you utter; and if I were without means would accept your help, would accept your provision in the same spirit in which it is offered. As it is, though, I am blessed with more than enough for the needs of living, and a comfortable home besides——"

"Yes, I'm glad of that—that the home is yours, yours by inheritance and not the gift of that—Curtman. But," she continued after a pause, "I would make him pay alimony.

I would wring from him every dollar I could."

Gertrude turned her face toward her aunt. She tried to keep out of it the scorn she felt; she did keep it out of her voice.

"No, I will not ask, or accept money from him," she said.

"Well, you may be right," Mrs. Bramlet assented; "that may be best. It *is* best," she suddenly agreed, in the hasty change that sometimes comes as a phase of anger. "You *are* right; let there be no communication between you of any kind. Accept nothing from him, *nothing*. Let there be no reminders of him—none; not even a check with his name, in your bank book.

"But, Gertrude," she resumed after a little silence, "I want you to stay with me; think better of it, child, and live with me."

"No, I must go back to my home," Gertrude answered unwaveringly, "my associates

and business interests are all there, and my house is full of sweet memories."

"But what will you do, my child? Will you not die of sheer loneliness? What will fill your long dreary days? How will you occupy yourself?"

"I cannot tell you, Aunt, I'm in the dark now. I must wait for light to be thrown on my path. It will come; our 'heavenly Father' will not leave me to grope; a Christian woman must have her work to do—it is awaiting me somewhere, and I trust Him to give it to me—and strength to do it. I must fill out my days in usefulness, nay cheerfulness; I must not press to other lips the cup that is mine and mine only. The Rubicon is passed with me, and with my back to it, I must journey on—as I am led."

Gertrude's exalted sentiments were out of Mrs. Bramlet's reach at present; she might, doubtless would, in time, come to accept them,

but not to-day; so after a moment's pause, kept on in the groove in which she had begun:

"Oh, Gertrude, this is something terrible. How could it have come about? The brute! If you had been ugly or even plain I might understand how a man *without principle* could have been bewildered, ensnared by an adventuress, but you are beautiful. This is not the silly bragging of a doting aunt; you know it yourself—you must know it; your mirror and the world both tell you so. And besides you are clever, no cleverer woman lives."

Gertrude heard very little of what her aunt was saying—only now and then a word drifted into her ears. She had just now but one sense, the sense of sight, as sitting by her open trunk, and looking down into one of its compartments, she saw among her jewelry a miniature of Morrison, his handsome face

turned smilingly towards hers. It was a good likeness of him when taken; it was a good one now, and she felt a keen throb of pain in her heart as she returned the steady look of the eyes, and looked upon the full, well-curved lips that seemed, even yet, to be saying something tender and loving to her. This painting had been made in Berlin, at no small cost, and its setting was in keeping with the beauty of the face, a rim of gold studded with pearls. It was his present to her on the fifth anniversary of their marriage.

He had planned it as a surprise, having heard her express a desire for a likeness of him that would do him justice, a painting by the finest of artists on the finest of ivory. And in those days Morrison was not a man of wealth—to gratify this desire of hers meant the curtailing of some expense considered essential, or the leaving unpurchased something of consequence. This extravagance meant

that Morrison must wear his overcoat two winters, after it was out of style and looked the worse for wear. He laughingly said this to Gertrude when he gave it. "Now, Gertrude," he said, "you can only wear this on chilly days—it's my *overcoat.*"

All this came back as if it had been but yesterday, as she sat looking down upon the lineaments, living again her happy wifehood.

"Oh! how can I live without him?" she said—but not aloud; "no mortal shall hear this from my lips. God only knows this great query of my heart, and He alone can answer!"

CHAPTER III

"Go lady! lean to the night-guitar,
And drop a smile to the bringer;
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an indoor singer;

. . . . .

But dare not call it loving!"

Mr. and Mrs. Landray had, some weeks previous to Gertrude's return, moved to New York; the Joplins, whose house they had occupied, were back from Europe, and they could find no other establishment suited—on the same terms—to their needs. Besides, Mrs. Landray had on hand a scheme that needed New York for its working, though not her husband's sanction. She had not confided it to him.

And then, too, she sighed for new environments—she realized she had been "dropped," and found the bottom of the social ladder

tame after the exhilarations of the upper rungs.

But Curtman did not follow—not at once. The complications in his business took and kept him far a-field. The Curtman Company was just now making changes in its time-worn customs, the chief of which was one of Curtman's innovating; and he could not calmly see his enterprise fall through for lack of ministering to its instant need, which need was now his instant presence. His business reputation was at stake, the loss of which would have hurt him more, far more, than loss of money. He held in high esteem his business talents, and it must be owned results had heretofore confirmed his judgment.

He had clamored for a wider field of action, and now that it had been given, he must work it to the uttermost.

Many of the directors had opposed the enlargement of the business when it was first

suggested, but as Curtman was practically its owner, he was not silenced, but carried out his views, despite their protest.

"Ours is already one of the largest coffee houses in the West, and our dividends satisfactory," argued the conservatives; "why turn from the beaten track, as it is one of prosperity, to an untried route?"

"Why not launch out and accomplish more?" asked Curtman. "Why not have plantations of our own—now by purchase, later on by planting, and have this house here the market of our own fields?"

His arguments and figures both were plausible, nor were they made of reveries and fancies, or founded on imaginary data. His investigations had been personal and thorough. Besides a journey thither he had written many a letter, gathered and compiled all the statistics and reports he could find, and interviewed every man he came across who had ever been

to Costa Rica, for it was there he planned to operate the business.

Gertrude had been interested in the enterprise from its inception, and in her way did all she could for its promotion. She had saved every bit of information she came across, every article on coffee growing, or life in that part of the world, to read to Morrison at night as they sat together by their lamp; had made many a little memorandum and calculation for him, and taken care of all his statistics and correspondence on the subject.

She was eminently a womanly woman, caring little for business outside her sphere, nor was it Curtman's wont to bring cares home. He shut his door upon them when he left his counting-house; he had enough of them there, he said, to all of which Gertrude agreed.

But this enterprise was his exception; he brought this home, and Gertrude gave it ready hearing and hearty interest, which interest

Curtman found more than a passing stmulant —indeed a constant tonic.

"And whenever you go you will take me with you?" she asked.

"I will never go without you," he replied.

"It would be so new and beautiful," she dreamed—the banana fields, majestic palms, the strange, bright birds, the tangled growths that riot in the tropics, and flashing in between glimpses of the Caribbean dotted with its fruit-laden craft. The dusky natives, too, employed her fancy. She saw them in the glistening fields, outlined on the southern sky, or singing in the star-lit night about their cabin doors. She had read much of them, both the good and bad, and in her dreaming planned for them many benefactions; for interwoven with all wishes for her own, were schemes for the happiness of others.

Curtman knew there was no one in the firm able to deal with the complications that had

arisen in this far-off business, yet in its infancy, except himself; moreover that he could not reach results by letter or by proxy, only in person; and so, much as he would have liked to go to New York, found himself shortly after instead in Costa Rica. And, although he had not expected to learn there what he wished, or make the arrangements he should find necessary, in a day or week, yet he was surprised to find the weeks lengthening into months before he could return.

When he did return he made only a few days' stay, then hastened East. . . .

How many changes can be brought about—how much of the unexpected come to pass in a few short months! How like the groupings of a freshly turned kaleidoscope do unlooked-for events close about lives, which to the outside world have seemed a continuous chain of eventless days. Although Mrs. Landray's life had never been a continuous chain of eventless

days, the changes that came to pass in it, within a few weeks' time, were surprising, even to those who knew her best—or thought they did.

Curtman had heard of Mr. Landray's death and knew that Mrs. Landray, in consequence, had not found it necessary to obtain the divorce she was about to crave, but he was by no means prepared for the other changes he found—changes in the environment of Mrs. Landray, and in Mrs. Landray herself.

She did not know that he was in New York. He had not communicated with her by letter, message, or in any way heralded his coming. His call was unannounced.

He found her domiciled in one of the fashionable quarters of the metropolis. As he ascended the steps he could but observe the elegant appearance of the house and its surroundings. He looked closely at the number again, to assure himself that he was at the right place. His ring was answered by a man in livery, who

extended a silver waiter for his card, and after ushering him into the drawing-room withdrew.

Though Curtman's mind was not at present analytic, he could but note the look of luxury about him—rich-toned rugs, pictures, vases, oriental drapings, and over it all the brilliant glare of electric burners in unstinted numbers. All this Curtman saw, and fell to wondering.

In a short while Mrs. Landray swept into the room in full evening dress—a dress of pure white, elegant in the simplicity of the soft, rich crêpe with its tasteful accessories. A dainty white opera cloak was on her arm, and in one of her glove-cased hands she held a large loose bouquet of white roses. From a long string of pearls around her neck, depended a lorgnette, much be-gemmed.

"How grand you look!" exclaimed Curtman, rising and meeting her with outstretched hands.

"You must have heard I was coming, for

all I kept it so secret," he said, scanning with admiration her beautiful toilet—"surely there's no other man you would begown yourself so handsomely to see?"

She laughed, but the laugh had not spontaneity, and with nervous haste began a conversation. But words and voice were both constrained.

But this Curtman had scarcely time to note before she was again composed, and like a well-skilled driver with a restless steed, had got the conversation well in hand, and down to natural paces.

"Yes," she said, "my dress is altogether white, like a sweet girl graduate's, as you say, but it's my mourning—pure white is considered mourning."

"The best kind of mourning for people who don't mourn?" Morrison laughed.

"Oh, well—Mr. Landray *was* kind."

"And blind."

Mrs. Landray smiled. "You may consider me overdressed," she continued, "but I am going to the opera to-night. I was just drawing on my gloves when your card was handed me, and so came on down."

"That suits me—I will go to the opera with you. You shall not go alone."

"No, I have company," Mrs. Landray hastened to explain—"Mr. Varnon is my escort, Horace Varnon. You have heard of him maybe?"

"Oh, yes, indeed—a Wall Street plunger. The speculating world knows him well," replied Curtman. "And so that accounts for all this," he continued, looking around the richly furnished room.

"We are engaged."

"Engaged! I thought—I understood——"

"That is just it, Mr. Curtman; it was an understanding with you—nothing more. This man has asked me to marry him. He has

money, and I know how to spend it. Money is what I need; it will bring out, and show off the best that is in me."

"Oh, yes, you have, I know, a thousand virtues. They need but the setting of gold to make them shine!"

"I am not flattering myself, merely stating a fact," she continued, ignoring his interruption, "that the air of luxury is my native element, a part of me as it were; laces and gems and the accessories of wealth are not only becoming to me, I am becoming to them. My tailor, the finest in New York, tells his customers that no one shows to such good advantage his work as I. Oh, I have no doubt, using my opportunities as I know how, but I shall in time, and not a long time either, hold an assured place in society."

"Oh, I see—you have social aspirations!"

"Of course I have. What woman has not? It enrages me, that women whose equal I am

in education, travel, and cleverness, and women no better than I—you need not smile, I mean what I say, *no better than I*—should ride the topmost wave, while I lie only one among the many pebbles on the beach.

"But," she continued, after a pause, "you need not feel hard toward me. After all I have done you a service—I was the means of your getting rid of a woman you had ceased to love. If it had not been for me, you might have been bored with your wife's company the rest of your life."

Her words stunned him like a sudden and unlooked for blow. How dared she say a thing like that of Gertrude! and yet how dared he contradict it, or say aught in her defense—what right had he? They shocked him—he drew back from her as she uttered them like one who had received, and feared the repetition of a thrust.

He sat in silence, looking down on the floor,

hearing not a word of Mrs. Landray's continued remarks. For though of a different nature, and on other subjects, they had no power now to gain his ear. In the midst of them Mr. Varnon was announced.

Mrs. Landray arose and met him with effusive welcome—then turning towards her guest, who had himself arisen, introduced them.

"Mr. Varnon," she said, "this is Mr. Curtman of Chicago, an old companion of my husband's, and his wife—is my most intimate friend."

With such assurances as these, Mr. Varnon offered his hand, and was pleased to be very cordial in his acknowledgment of the introduction. He made immediate and complimentary comment on the vastness and enterprise of the city from which Mr. Curtman hailed; inquired how long he would favor New York with his presence; invited him to call at his office; and assured him it would give

him great pleasure to contribute to the enjoyment of, or in any way serve, the husband of Mrs. Landray's most intimate friend!

Both he and Mrs. Landray, as they arose to leave, expressed regret that the lateness of the hour should curtail an interview so delightful. They all left the house together, and after some farewell courtesies at the carriage door, parted, they for their drive to the opera, Morrison for a long, long tramp of square after square, in what direction he neither knew nor cared. He had need for a long walk, he had much over which to think, and he felt that now, enclosed in the four walls of a room, this restlessness of a caged tiger would increase to madness.

Could he be dreaming? he wondered. If so, when would the night and dream be gone? Oh, that he would awake and find it had been a horrible nightmare that left him with his slumber! He could not explain—how could

he explain what he in no wise understood?—that he cared so little about losing this woman's love. In fact, he owned to a feeling of relief that she had passed out of his existence; and began wondering if this infatuation—for as such he now regarded it—had not been an insanity, if it were not possible for a man to be insane and not know it!

"But the past is now forever past," he said to himself; "regrets are unavailing; what is done is *done*. As for Gertrude, she is a part of the past—lost to me, eliminated from my existence—no thought or memory of her shall dwell in my mind."

A man's unhappiness—he argued—comes largely from his harking back to his troubles, bringing them himself from the hiding to which they had been consigned, and in which they would have stayed if left alone. He often turned his key on a drawer of papers—it stayed locked; why not close the door of

thought on irrevocables and let them no more see the light of day! "Mine *shall* be banished, and forever," he said; "I so will it. . . . There must be a world of pleasure for a man with wealth and health—a man not yet five-and-thirty, and that world shall be mine!"

He recalled two friends at home who would help him be happy after the manner he was planning—George Kantrell and Lewis Beverley. Kantrall was a gay Lothario about his age. Gertrude had always objected to him as an associate of her husband, not that she feared any misleading influence, but his reputation was of the kind obnoxious to her. Beverley was a fellow whose company was always in demand, agreeable, entertaining, and good-looking; a married man, and father; but it was said the obligations and responsibilities of life were very lightly worn by him.

He would cultivate these men now, he promised himself; they should be his running-mates.

CHAPTER IV

"The world is full of beaten roads,
But yet so slippery withal."

In the midst of this reverie, someone touched his arm:

"Is this the way you pass a friend in his own home? How dare you walk along *my* streets without noticing me!"

It was Granville Collins. Curtman held out his hand.

"I'm certainly glad to meet you, Granville," he said, and truthfully; for he was heartily tired of himself and his own thoughts.

"What are you doing with yourself to-night, if I may be so bold as to inquire?"

"Nothing."

"Well, you can do that any other night as well, but you cannot every night run upon

such a *rara avis* as I to flock with. We are of a feather now, you know!"

Mr. Collins laughed aloud at his own wit, but Morrison failed to see it; and ignoring his merriment, said he would be in the city for the night only—his business would not detain him longer.

"Come with me to the club, then. I am on my way there now. It's worth seeing in the first place, and the rendezvous for a lot of my cronies worth meeting in the second. I suspect you will go home and straightway fashion yours after it. We had a grand reception there a few evenings since. I suppose you read about it. You don't care for receptions? Well, it just suits, then; there's nothing especial on the programme for the evening."

Morrison accepted, and after a little walk they arrived at the club, where he was introduced to quite a number of the "birds of a feather." After some short, desultory con-

versation, they seated themselves around a card table.

Morrison did not care for cards especially, but to-night he began the game with much interest and in nervous haste. But the nervousness was soon gone and the interest flagged. He drank more than the others—a great deal more—was sometimes winner, sometimes loser, without caring which of the two he was. The amounts they played for were very small, he said, and suggested bigger stakes. "You ought to try to interest a visitor from a distance; I'm from—a little town out West they call—Chicago. Maybe, though, you think I haven't got the money. I'll bet I could buy the whole lot of you—Collins here thrown in for good measure."

He was a man of natural fairness of face and dignity of manner, but to-night he was flushed, and loud in his conversation, laughed vociferously at his own and companions' silly

remarks, and even essayed a song. But through it all there ran the consciousness, that the wine and cards had brought neither happiness nor oblivion.

He dropped ashes and tobacco on his broad expanse of shirt front; his hair was disheveled, and his hat—for he had risen to leave—was poised on his head at a ridiculous angle. He caught a glimpse of himself in the opposite mirror, and through his maudlin brain there came a recognition of his condition, and he felt nettled that he had played the buffoon for a lot of men who would not the next day recognize him on the street.

His gait was uncertain, but holding to the back of a chair he steadied himself sufficiently to make some parting remarks, which were an odd mixture of urbanity and rudeness.

"Ah, well—gentlemen," he said slowly—"you have been very kind—an'—an'—amusing." Looking up to the ceiling and around

the room deliberately—for he was necessarily deliberate—on its luxurious appointments he continued:

"And—you have a handsome—gambling house—for gentlemen."

"This is no gambling house for gentlemen," they answered in concert.

"Ah—yes, I see—just a—house where gentlemen—gamble!"

"Where are you taking me, Collins?" he asked quite helplessly when they reached the street.

"To my apartments—you must stay with me to-night."

"The best trump yet, old boy—you are," he said, and resigned himself to Collins' care.

The following morning Morrison was still asleep when Granville breakfasted, in fact, had not yet awakened when he went down into the city, which he did a little later than usual,

leaving orders, however, with his servants to give Mr. Curtman the best of care while he was away.

On return to luncheon, he found his friend altogether his former self, fair of face, well-groomed, and reading the morning paper as calmly as if nothing of a disagreeable nature had happened the night previous, or had *ever* happened.

They exchanged pleasant salutations, talked of the weather and the news of the day. There was some interesting information concerning the market which they discussed at length, as well as the recent political moves which they believed would have much effect on the coming elections.

Collins was certainly glad to find his friend so fully restored mentally and physically, yet he could but think it strange that he made no allusion to the escapade of the night before. He would not demand it, but he certainly

thought an apology due him from Curtman, for having made of himself a drunken rowdy, in the presence of the gentlemen to whom he had introduced him.

But their tête-à-tête was finished and the luncheon dispatched with never a reference to the objectionable episode.

This silence argued ill for Curtman's habits, Collins concluded; it looked much as if drunkenness was nothing new to him; on the contrary, something in which he was so hardened that he never thought of referring to it. He almost determined it was his duty to warn him, but refrained—Curtman was not easily approached concerning his faults.

"Come, go with me to the station, Granville," he said when the carriage was announced.

Granville consented, and after a short drive they found themselves among the passengers that were walking back and forth in front of

the gate awaiting their trains. Curtman's train was about due.

"I owe you an apology, Granville," he said, turning and looking him full in the face, "and I now and here make it. I disgraced you last night, and disgraced myself. Your friends and you, too, may think I am a drunkard. I am far from what I should be, old friend—a fool, maybe, but not a drunken one, not a *sot*. I was particularly distraught last night—and tried the bowl. But one experience has been enough—it shall never occur again."

After he was on his train his thoughts were much along the same line. He had never had much patience with drunkenness, and this debauch left him with less now than ever, and he recalled, with a regret he had never felt before, the fact that Kantrell had long been addicted to the excessive use of liquor, not continuously, but in sprees.

He thought of this a great deal, and set for

himself the task of arguing him out of a course so ruinous.

The journey to Chicago was long and tedious, but he succeeded quite as well as he had expected, in keeping out harassing thoughts; and that drawer of his memory labeled *Gertrude* he kept fairly well closed. There was diversion in talking with the few acquaintances aboard, and then, too, he consumed a good deal of time in sketching out some future exploits with Kantrell and Beverley, halfway promising himself a trip abroad with them next summer. He had not seen them since his return from Costa Rica. He had been too busy the few days he was in Chicago to hunt up friends.

With this picture in his mind of them, hale and vigorous as himself, what was his surprise, when the Chicago papers were brought aboard the train, to read the announcement of Kantrell's death!

Could it be possible—had not his eyes de-

ceived him! Surely, it meant some other Kantrell. He read it again; the name in full was given and the number of the residence, which he recognized as the home of Kantrell's mother, with whom he was living. There was no mistake; it was indeed *his* Kantrell. Moreover, in a more extended notice, in one of the other papers, the funeral arrangements were given, and he, Morrison Curtman, was named among the pallbearers!

This was, indeed, a sudden reversal of his thoughts—a complete change of his plans. Instead of the trip he had thought to take with him abroad, he was to help lay him in his grave —instead of the handsome souvenir he had already, in his mind, purchased for him, he was to lay flowers on his pall!

It was a sad home-coming to him. This trouble accentuated his others; like a strong searchlight suddenly turned on, it seemed to bring them out in their grewsome hideousness.

He felt that he had entered his penumbra, that a thick cloud had settled on him that would not lift at his bidding.

But he resumed at once his work-a-day life, glad that a world of letters had piled up on his desk. He welcomed every knotty problem that was brought him; accepted every task laid upon him, and went about it all with an earnest eagerness, that excited wonder in those about him, used as they were to his ceaseless industry.

But he made no moan, invited and gave no confidences. He knew, but hid it from his friends, that life had fallen with him into minor chords, had ceased to be a roundelay and become a requiem!

CHAPTER V

"And he arose, and came to his father."

—Luke xv.

THERE came to Morrison's ears a report concerning Beverley, that surprised him as much as had Kantrell's death. He had become a church-member, he was told.

He was at a loss, at first, to know what this meant; he hardly thought Beverley would indulge in hypocrisy, and yet, he could not dissociate him from a life far removed from churchliness.

"I've lived at a rapid rate," Beverley said to him one day, "running along the edge of a precipice as it were. I'm thankful I did not topple over when I was at my giddy height, and was put in a safer path. Yes, I'm a Christian; I do not know what kind of a one I'll make—that remains to be seen."

He was surprised that he took as much interest as of yore in Beverley's companionship, and noted, as the time passed by, that Beverley was the only one of his former friends whose treatment of him was in every way the same. The others dined and supped him, it is true, as he did them—at the club, but Beverley entertained him at his *home.*

And what a treat were these glimpses of a family circle, complete in husband, wife, and children, and to be, if for but an hour, one of the cheerful group at its ingleside! He spoke of these visits to Beverley, he thought of them himself, as oases in his desert!

Curtman did not find, as readily as he expected, a place of abode. He tried the best hotels, one after another, but was never satisfied—something was always wrong, and he could not tell what it was. He had never considered himself fault-finding or capricious, but suddenly he had become both.

He came, however, to see, and own to himself that it was he, and not the hostelry, that was at fault.

At last he reached a permanency in an uptown hotel, located in the old neighborhood in which he had lived, and not many squares from his former home. In the day he could see the house from his window, and at night a light was visible from the lamp in Gertrude's bedroom, where he knew it was her custom to sit. And often when the day's work was over he found himself seated at the window, his eyes fastened on that lamp, and his thoughts on the woman who sat beside it!

He had long since found that his *willing* a thing was not its *accomplishment,* that he could *not* close up the avenues of thought as easily as the drawers of his desk. Moreover, he had come to be glad that he could not—that he could *not* forget. Memory brought to him some bitter draughts, it was true, but many a

pleasant one as well. He would not have exchanged for peace—the peace of forgetfulness—his past, lined and underscored though it was with pain.

No, no, not oblivion—the bitter was indeed bitter, but the sweet so sweet!

Nearly a year had passed since Morrison had seen Gertrude, when one day their severed paths met an instant on the street. She gave him the salutation she would have given any acquaintance. He was astonished beyond measure, and wondered if she had indeed perceived that it was he, or mistaken him for someone worthier her recognition. His presence of mind, almost his courtesy, forsook him; but after an awkward fashion he lifted his hat, and turning looked after her, as if she had been a princess who had stepped out of her chariot and accosted him. And worse than his embarrassment, bad as it was, came the vexing consciousness that he had *betrayed it.*

That night as he sat by the window, looking across to where her lamp burned like a star in the darkness, he took from his pocket a little blank book and made mention of this incident.

He had begun keeping an intermittent diary —he called its pages his "confidant." "I can confide to you," he said, "things I would trust to no other friend. You are not obsequious, you do not try to condone my faults! you accept my statements with no embarrassing demurs. If I call myself a brute or madman, you give silent acquiescence, and that is what I want."

Thursday: "I passed Gertrude on the street to-day," it read. "She spoke to me. Why I should have been surprised, knowing Gertrude as I do, and that she would have saluted a streetsweep had she known him, I cannot tell, but I was; I made a sorry spectacle. Guilt is always embarrassed in the presence of virtue." . . .

Tuesday: "I went to the Charity Bazaar last night. I don't know why. I had bought a handful of tickets and given them all away but one. It is quite a society fad, I'm told, but it was certainly not on that account I went. To be honest with you, my friend, I went because I hoped I might see her.

"I sat in a secluded place, made by the grouping of palms and ferns about a rockery, and waited until she would pass, for I rightly thought she would be there—I knew the object of this effort, one that is always dear to her heart. In days gone by I had come to the kirmess with her many a time myself. What would I not give now for my place at her side! There was excellent music; the best singers of the city were on the programme. Bernardi's voice was never sweeter, and when in encore he gave the old-time favorite, 'Oft in the Stilly Night,' there was a hush over the whole house, —one could hear himself breathe. There was

a world of tenderness in his voice, and when he reached the words, 'I feel like one who treads alone, some banquet hall deserted,' I was glad, indeed, that I was hidden behind the palms. I wonder why we are ashamed of tears!

"Presently Gertrude came by with our old neighbors, the Wards and Scotts. Some others were of the party, Granville Collins among them. He was not talking with her; she was with Mrs. Gilbert, but he was in the company. . . . I felt indignant. It was in bad taste, to say the least of it, for him to be with her, and yet—I had no right to feel aggrieved. . . . Everybody will recall now that he was once a lover of hers. She surely knows that it will excite comment. But Gertrude always had a certain kind of independence. I used to admire it. It annoys me now. But he knows better—he is a man—he knows how the world talks, and should not abuse the kindliness and

courtesy of an unsuspecting woman. It's a poor return for her considerateness. But as I said, he was not walking or talking with her —only made one of the party. . . . He told me he was going back to New York day before yesterday. Stayed over to attend this bazaar I suppose.

"I don't know what his rating as a business man is. Poor, I'm afraid—afraid? I need not say afraid, as I don't care. . . . I had a few friends left, whom I enjoyed; Collins was one of them, but I'm tiring of him. He is not the man I thought him. He's a bore and I wonder that Gertrude can endure him." . . .

Friday: "I saw Gertrude drive by to-day. There was a pretty young girl in the carriage with her. I wonder who it was? She did not see me, or she affected not to see me. She used to never *affect* anything, but it's a strong temptation to pretend *not* to see or speak to someone who has—I might as well be honest

with myself and say the word—who has *wronged* you. . . . But I must not give way to misery and bitter broodings—she was mine once. I must never forget that, no matter what—has come to pass, she *was* mine once. . . . I wonder how it would have been with her if she had been the one to blame—but I will not think that! It is an insult to her. . . . I'm glad *she* can forget the past and be happy. *I* cannot." . . .

Monday: "I go on Sunday mornings to the café past which Gertrude walks to church. . . . I saw her yesterday, unchanged and beautiful—the same elastic step, the same prettily poised head, the same daintily rounded figure. But how can she have that sweet look of peace on her face—how can she have the *look* on her *face,* or the peace in her *heart?* I remember once reading of a vine that, climbing up the cliff, became a sheet of verdure, though at its foot it had scarcely earth enough in which

to hide its roots. It seemed a living marvel, until research revealed the fact that its main root, clinging to a log, had spanned the chasm to the brook beyond! *She* has left, may be, 'earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.' "

CHAPTER VI

"I am sorry that I am deceiv'd in him."

A FEW days after the preceding entries, Jerry was in Curtman's room cleaning the windows.

Jerry was that member of the hotel force whose duty was to keep bright the windows, polish the brasses, turn on and off the lights at night, and do many little things, essential to the smooth running of an establishment, where the comfort of the body mortal was cared for—for a consideration.

Curtman had known him a long while. Both Jerry and his sister, Eliza Jane, had been reared by Gertrude's aunt, Mrs. Bramlet, and Eliza Jane was still (as she had been for many years) Mrs. Curtman's cook.

Jerry was going over some little family history this afternoon, as he cleaned the windows

in Morrison's room, and Morrison was giving the eager ear he always gave to what he had to say; for he knew that sooner or later, in his remarks, which were generally of a desultory nature, Jerry would make some mention of Gertrude. No other human being ever called her name in his presence, and his ears were hungry for the sound!

"Yes, Miss Kath'rn raised me an' Lizerjane; our mammy wuz one uv they ole fam'bly servents. We cum up heyr with her frum New-ol*ee*ns. We wuz 'bout half-growed an' skittish, like young colts, when she fust took hold uv us; but she soon har'nist us up an' broke us in."

"Yes, Mrs. Bramlet understands breaking people in, I've no doubt."

"Now, Boss, youse got a wrong *i*dey 'bout Miss Kath'rn, you doan understan' her; she doan mean no harm by that sav'ge way she's got uv talkin'. Jest go 'long like you doan hear nuthin' she say an' sh'll furgit what she's

talkin' 'bout. I do suttin' wish she wuzn't so much oler than me an' likliest ter die fust; ef she wuzn't I'd jest lay off to fall on her han's ter take keer uv me when I gits ole. As 'tiz I dunno who's gwine ter take keer uv me when I gits ole, less'n it's Miss Gertrue." After a moment's thought, he added, "An' that's jest who'll do it," with the pleased assurance of a man who announces he has ahead of him a gathering dividend in gilt-edge bonds.

After a little silent application to his work, Jerry resumed.

"Boss, you aint looking good like you use ter; youse fell off, ain't you?"

Curtman brought himself back with a start from where Jerry's words had carried him.

"Yes; but I was getting a little heavy—I had some flesh to spare."

"I dunno; you doan look like you use ter. Maybe the hotel eatin' doan 'gree with you. Wonder to me it 'grees with enybody—whole

passel o' things mixed up together till you can't tell whut they is. Leastwise I can't. I doan pay no 'tention to 'em myself, I jest goes on an' eats 'em things I'se use ter an' let 'em others go. I dunno' who do eat 'em! Think uv havin' a chickin frickerseed when you might uv fried it! An' that maronaze—they jest pour it over ev'rything. I'm lookin' fur 'em to pour it over the ice cream nex'."

Curtman laughed. This was all the encouragement Jerry needed.

"Now let me tell you, Boss," wringing out his cloth and proceeding to a fresh pane, "doan' you never eat no omlette at a hotel. There ain't no tellin' when that egg wuz laid that it's made out uv! When they brings it to you in the shell it's safe, but look out for the omlette."

"Well, I can get along without the omlette. But I get tired of hotel cooking generally. It isn't——"

"Whut youse use to; that's whut's the matter. I kno' whut you bin use ter, Boss. I've et many a meal in your ki'chen. Miss Gertrue sho' do kno' how to have good cookin'. She buys fust-class things to start on, an' then she has 'em put t'gether fust class. She kno's how to do ev'rything enyhow, Miss Gertrue does. She's whut I call a laidee. They all ain't laidees whut looks like it; but she is."

"Yes," assented Morrison with deliberateness and earnestness, "she is a lady—there is not in the whole world her equal, and—I'm—an ass."

"Jest so, Boss," agreed Jerry, rubbing away on the glass, "but there ain't many whut say that 'bout theyselves, tho' they must kno' ev'rybody else kin see it. Boss, did you kno' that Mr. Collins wuz in the hotel now. Come one day las' week."

"Yes, I have met him," and he recalled a

short interview they had had, not altogether without constraint on both sides.

"Do you remember how you an' him use ter both uv you be waitin' on Miss Gertrue when you wuz young men?"

Curtman certainly remembered that. Like the fresh, sweet breath from a bed of violets the memory came back to him. Yes, they had both loved her, but the race with him, as with his other rivals, had been short. Only a little while did the love of coquetry get the mastery of her; only a little while did she delay acknowledging the return of his affection, soon to become his wife. And then they had lived ten such happy years together. How short it appeared as he looked back now—only one moon it seemed, and that a honeymoon. . . . And now he had lost her! Lost her? No, not lost her, he had *thrown her away!* The lines deepened on his forehead and an ashen whiteness came to his face.

Had Jerry turned he would have ceased his work to offer aid. But he did not turn, instead continued with his polishing and with his talk.

"Lizerjane says Mr. Collins has had the 'surance to call on Miss Gertrue, but he might jest as well stayed at home. Miss Gertrue ain't gwine ter look at him!"

Curtman was silent, but he had heard, and the remark made stronger a suspicion that had crept into his brain. Gertrude marry again—someone else! The thought was monstrous! He had considered himself miserable before, but it was far worse with him now. Here was another possibility of suffering, and into its depths he plunged, leaving Jerry's further comments unnoted, indeed unheard, and became so rapt in thought that he did not know when he finished his work and left the room. This, though, was partly due to Jerry's thoughtfulness, who forbore breaking

his reverie, and tipped lightly out of the room, noiselessly closing the door behind him.

"The Boss sho' do study mighty hard," he soliloquized, as he walked down the hall. "I boun' he's studyin' 'bout Miss Gertrue now. That man ain't quit lovin' that 'oman yit. An' he never will—he *can't!*"

CHAPTER VII

"For when all these wishes have died away,
The deep strong love of a brighter day,
Though nourished in secret consumes the more,
As the slow rust eats to the iron's core."

. . . . .

"Do these beams that shine
So clearly, come from your sweet home to mine?"

THE evening had almost deepened into twilight before Curtman left his business house for his hotel, which, by-the-way, he always called his hotel, never his home. The car he boarded was quite full of passengers; the few vacant seats left were at the farther end, and at the next stop made, Gertrude entered and took one of these.

Even to pass her on the street, or see her in the distance, he counted a happy epoch in his existence, an event that was the subject of many musings and lengthy entries in his diary,

but now, to be under the same roof with her, even though but the roof of a public conveyance, and she oblivious of his nearness, he accepted with a thrill of joy, congratulating himself that the ride must be so long.

He did not see her face; it was averted as she looked steadily out of the window by which she sat, but anywhere in the world he would have recognized the contour of those shapely shoulders, that beautifully poised head, and those small, pink-tipped ears.

The route of the car lay partly through an old ramshackle quarter of the city, where all regard for appearances had long since vanished. Second-hand stores, tenement houses of the dilapidated kind, and saloons were in continual evidence; and it was just in the midst of these surroundings that Gertrude left the car.

What could she mean! The old-time sense of ownership and protection flashed up in

Morrison like a fuse at the touch of fire, and without a second thought he, too, got off.

Why was she here in this part of the town? and at this hour? He would see; he would give no regard to appearances, to anything. He would follow her; even if she should turn and see him, he would follow her! But she did not turn; she walked straight along on her errand—whatever it was—without haste or nervousness, turning neither to the right nor left. He followed too close for prudence; too intent to lag in his quest.

At length she reached a house, that seemed to be her journey's end; a large double building, with rooms on either side the spacious hall. It had evidently been pretentious in its day; but its day was far back in the past, and now, only the broad stone steps, and semicircle of grimy carving above the entrance, betrayed its past ambitions.

Up these steps Gertrude went, and after a

short pause in the hall, only long enough for a response to her knock, was shut from view in one of these rooms. Curtman followed her into the hall. His entrance had not been challenged; the hall was but the common passway for the roomers on both floors. There was no liveried servant *here* to answer his ring, indeed, no bell to ring.

He stood a while, irresolute, by the door Gertrude had entered, then walked a little further down, and, finding an empty upturned box in the shadow of the stairway, seated himself upon it, *to wonder,* and await her reappearance.

Some children with unkempt hair, in tattered clothes passed shyly around him as if suspicious of his presence in their domain; and two girls, with painted faces and in tawdry finery, looked at him askance as they went up the stairs, talking loud enough for him to hear, about the "dude." These came back again

and gave him a second look, but his eyes were so unseeing, and his countenance so solemn, that they concluded there was something wrong with him.

"He's crazy," one of them said; "I'm 'fraid of him."

"Yes, he's crazy," agreed the other.

Morrison heard these whispered confidences.

"They may be right," he said to himself; "I may be *crazy*."

After a while the door through which Gertrude had gone opened again, and she reappeared, followed by an old woman, to whom she was giving some final directions.

"See that Maggie has every attention that is necessary," she was saying. "If the doctor is needed any more have him come. I will settle the bills; and when she is well she must come back to her place."

"Oh, Mrs. Curtman," the old woman was replying, "we can't tell you how we are

obleeged to you. An' you don't know, you *can't* know, how much it means to us fer you to take her back agin. The poor thing certainly is penitent, an' I hope the Lord has forgiven her, but she says she wuz 'fraid you wouldn't take her back, and ef you, good as you wuz, wouldn't let her work fer you, who on earth would! Did you notice how she couldn't say nuthin', jest looked down and cried, when you told her she could come back? You'll get your reward, Mrs. Curtman—you'll get your reward!"

She watched Gertrude until she was down the steps and on the sidewalk. Turning back into the hall she perceived Curtman, who had risen, but was still standing in the shadow of the stairway.

"Who are you?" she demanded, "and what are you doing here?" for his dress and general appearance, even in the darkening hall, showed that he was not one of the tenants.

"Are you a doctor, or preacher?" she continued, "fer ef you ain't, you ain't got no business here."

Curtman, taken thus off guard, forgot, if he had framed a reason for his presence, and blurted out the fact.

"I followed Mrs. Curtman here," he said.

"You followed Mrs. Curtman here! You jes' ought to let *Mr.* Curtman hear you say that onct! They's had trouble, of course, an' ain't livin' together, but nobody can't do her eny harm an' think they won't hear frum him. Followed Mrs. Curtman, indeed!"

From the first glimpse Morrison had caught as she came out of the door with Gertrude, he recognized in the old woman Mrs. Turner, an adept at special kinds of housework, who had often done service at his home, and whose niece had been Gertrude's maid. He recalled now that he had heard poor Maggie was in trouble.

"Mrs. Turner, you don't recognize me," he said, turning to her as they neared the door.

"Why, Mr. Curtman, is this *you!*" She exclaimed, starting back. "I didn't know it was you; I wouldn't a-said what I did. Of course, I never thought that you would——"

"Of course not, I understand. I'm glad you said what you did. I would protect her at the risk of my life any day. Yes, she is a lady, and—my wife. But I am a madman, Mrs. Turner, and—an idiot."

"Yes, yes," assented Mrs. Turner, as if the assertion was one not to be gainsaid.

"But hurry on, Mr. Curtman," she added, pointing to the darkening street, in which the lamps had not yet been lighted. "You hurry after Mrs. Curtman; this is a bad neighborhood for the likes o' her to be in, with the night nearly here."

Morrison needed no urging. He quickened his pace almost to a run, and reached the corner

in time to see Gertrude board a home-bound car.

When he got back to his hotel he did not go in to dinner—though it was far past his usual hour—until across the intervening darkness he saw flash out the rays of her lamp, and knew that she had reached her home in safety.

Tuesday: "This has been a red-letter day with me. I had the privilege and honor of doing my wife a service! Yes, my wife—I shall call her this till death. How *can* 'man put asunder' those whom 'God hath joined together'! . . . I read a beautiful little poem to-day. A verse of it lodged in my mind. For fear I shall forget it, friend, I shall commit it to your keeping.

> "If God hath given thee me, dear heart,
> The whole round world can not keep us apart:
> No other's lips, not poverty or death
> Can keep thee from me, nay not e'en thyself."

"I come across many things that seem to have

been written especially for me. My pocket-book is filled with clippings: poems of sorrow, sin, suffering, and remorse. And some I have saved, some tell of love and forgiveness!" . . .

Wednesday: "Gertrude would far sooner think of earning her living, had she no means, by menial labor, than to accept, much less ask, alimony of me! Yet, I send her monthly a check; I send it one day, the next I find lying on my desk an envelope bearing my name, in her own writing, containing the same check. Not a word accompanies it. Yet I continue to send them. I want her to know how willing I am to furnish her with money; but more still, I want that envelope bearing my name in her own writing. It is something she has held in her hand, it has my name upon it that *she* has written! Once I made the draft the full amount of my deposit. It made no difference, it was back on my desk the following day. I

was ashamed of this, as I thought of it afterward; it looked as if I were trying to buy her —to pay her to condone my crime. She would have scorned such a thought and me for suggesting it. But she is charitable, and doubtless viewed it in some better light." . . .

Thursday: "It is not only an iniquity, but a mistake, for a man in seeking advancement in another's favor to commend the other's evil deeds. My favor is not bought with such coin. Smith said to me to-day, as we were talking together after business hours, 'This wise old world doesn't know as much as it thinks it does; wives sometimes give provocations that *it* never knows, and so the husbands are branded as brutes while the wives are eulogized as saints.'

"'And the world puts it correctly so far as my observation goes,' I replied.

"He looked surprised. I had intended he should be surprised. He is courting favor with me—looking to the secretaryship! If

he but knew it, I'd rather give it to Mrs. Turner, or Jerry; they both agreed with me that I was an idiot and an ass!" . . .

Monday: "I find that I am capricious and changeable, my friend, if, indeed, not positively insincere. It is the latter, I've no doubt. I have said to you more than once that I'm glad Gertrude is happy. It is not true—I am *not* glad. How can I be glad that she is happy, living on in perfect indifference to me!" . . .

Thursday: "They told me at the business house to-day that I was not looking well. I replied promptly, 'I am not well—I have dyspepsia.' It was the first ailment that came to my mind. It was another lie. I never had dyspepsia in my life—I have the stomach of an ostrich. I'm not as truthful as I used to be; I'm a worse man every way. I shall hereafter say that I have *heart trouble* and state a fact. We have two hearts, one the engine in our

breast that pumps the red current through our veins, the engine that works away at its appointed task whether we wake or sleep, whether we will it or not. But the other heart! I cannot locate it, neither can physicians. It is glad, it exults, it sings, it bounds with joy; again it longs, it languishes, it throbs with pain and struggles like a caged bird that beats itself against its bars. Yes, I can truly say I have *heart trouble!*"

Tuesday: "My days go by much the same; to-day is like yesterday, and yesterday was like the day before; work and worry at the house while there, loneliness and remorse, and idle reveries here. Try as I may I cannot *will* it otherwise.

> "The eyes of memory will not sleep,
> Its ears are open still,
> And vigils with the past they keep
> Against my feeble will!"

"Against my feeble will—ah, that is it, my *feeble will!*"

CHAPTER VIII

"Husband and wife! no converse now ye hold,
As once ye did in your young days of love."

. . . . .

"And yet, and yet,
My darling, I do sometimes quite forget
That we are parted—almost feel that I
Am still where you are, sometimes even try
To hear your footstep—Oh! dear heart, dear heart,
My other self, my purer, better part."

ONE night when Morrison felt particularly tired of himself and his surroundings, he decided on a longer than his usual walk. It was his custom to take a daily tramp of many squares, arguing that physical exhaustion brought rest; and it did—physical rest.

His walk this evening extended to the park. The warmth of the day, though greatly moderated, still lingered in the air; the moonlight flooded the lawns, the flower-beds, and foun-

tains; from the farther end of the grounds, where the band was stationed, came now and then strains of music, and nearer rang out the voices of drivers and equestrians.

But all this held for Morrison little interest; this note of gayety but poorly accorded with the minor chords of his threnody. These merry sounds of companionship only served to accentuate his loneliness.

A carriage with some chatty occupants drew near and paused while the horses drank at the basin. These too, like the others, would have gone unnoticed had he not heard his own name called in the course of a conversation then in progress.

He turned to see these possible acquaintances. He knew the men of the party, and recognized, in the fair occupants, two, of the three ladies, to whom he had been introduced at his hotel. They had been staying there for some weeks, he had heard, these daughters with

their mother, they the children, and she the widow of an eminent New York lawyer.

"Yes, Curtman is about the finest article on the matrimonial market," one of the men was saying, "unless you object to a divorcee."

"But he is so indifferent—indifference personified," the fair lady replied; "he scarcely more than recognizes his introduction to us, though it was given by one of his own friends."

"Oh, I see," he laughed, "he has not yet begun to 'take notice.' Well, you must give a man time—time to 'be off with the old love before he is on with the new.'"

"I give no such advice, Miss Randall; don't waste your time on Curtman; his 'old love' is his wife, and he will never be off with it. Make other use of your lasso."

"Now, don't listen to Semple," said the other man; "he is far too much interested to give good advice. Curtman threw away his wife for one woman, and while she is away,

what more probable than that another should capture him!"

"That is," interrupted Miss Randall, "he made himself an idiot about one woman, why should he not about another?"

"Exactly; history repeats itself!"

"Not always," said Semple. "Be advised by me. Curtman is big game, rated by figures, and as this word's used, clever into the bargain, but you'll be wasting your time. There's no lasso long enough to reach him."

"One reached him once," laughed the other man.

"But it broke," replied Semple.

They drove on.

"My name a laugh and jest; its respect and dignity gone!" Curtman said to himself bitterly.

He turned back into the city, and, strange to say, into the street—though it was several squares out of his way—that led past his old

home. He somehow felt that he could not sleep to-night unless he had seen it—been near the walls that held *her*.

He slackened his pace when he reached the block on which he had once lived; on which *she now* lived, and fastening his eyes on the house in his slow approach, noted every particular about it and its surroundings. The wistaria was richly adorned with its purple tassels, the clematis a sheet of blossoms, and the roses, grapes, and honeysuckles were filling the air with their fragrance. How like the old days it all seemed as he stood looking! Why not feed the fancy and turn in at the gate as if he were still lord of the premises? The lights were out in the hall and library, but hers still burned—she had not gone to bed.

Yielding to the impulse, he went with cautious tread up the walk, and seated himself in the very chair in which he had so often sat in the happy days when Gertrude was beside him.

There was a deep chasm between them now, he knew, but it was a kind of pleasure to be so near her and bridge it over with sweet memories. He tried to think her hand was in his, that she had come down the stairs, and, taking the chair by him, was telling him the little happenings of the day, and listening with pleased interest to all he had to say.

He sat fully an hour indulging such fancies when a man, passing along the sidewalk, stopped suddenly in front of the gate. This was indeed a dilemma—to be found here at Gertrude's home! For the fancies had died away, and the terrible fact obtruded itself upon him that he no longer *belonged* here!

The man turned at the gate as if to enter; the moonlight fell on a metal star on his coat, and Curtman, even before seeing his face, knew it was Allin Lester, the policeman. He had for many years walked this beat, and had come to be a kind of family friend.

He arose, and stepping softly along the walk, joined him. A pleased, kindly look overspread the policeman's face as he recognized the former master of the premises, and he shook his hand with a warmth and earnestness that Morrison did not understand at first, but whose source he discovered before he had gone many steps.

"Ah, it looks like the good old times to see you here, Mr. Curtman!"

"Yes, it looks natural; and natural to see you, too, Allin. You keep close watch here in the neighborhood, don't you—on this house?"

"That I do, Mr. Curtman, that I do. But now that you are back, I needn't have her on my mind no more. I'm glad—I'm gladder than I can tell you, Mr. Curtman, that it's all made up between you. She's a fine woman an' I'm glad for her to be happy agin. I always know'd you'd have to come back, you'd jest *have* to come back."

"But, Allin——" Curtman paused and cleared his throat.

"Yes, sir, there ain't a finer woman livin' than that lady there, shure; she says 'Good-morning' to me whenever she see me, same as if I was worth a million. And she always asks about the childern. And one day, when I told her they had scarlet fever, what do you think she done? Why, she come down to our house, and bein' as my wife was sick, nurse them herself."

"Did she do that, Allin? But what would she not do for the good or happiness of others!

"Oh, Allin," he said, as they neared the point where their paths diverged, "you are laboring under a mistake. It is not made up between us—this trouble. . . . Continue, my friend, your nightly vigils; whether it be still or stormy, guard well this house. I will see that you are rewarded."

"Rewarded! I ain't workin' for no reward in takin' care o' her!"

Curtman did not retire till late that night, and wrote much in his diary. Among the entries was an old song he had heard long ago; line by line the words came back and made themselves into the verses:

> "Often and often will memory go,
> Like a blind child lost in a waste of snow,
> Back to the days when you loved me so,
> The beautiful long ago.
>
> "I sit here dreaming them through and through,
> The blissful moments I shared with you,
> When you were trusting and I was true,
> Beautiful days, but few."

"How strange it is that one human being's life can be so much to another—that it can be of such intense interest where that other is, what doing, what thinking! . . . What misery to have once owned, but discarded, that which after it *is* discarded is found to be more to you than *all the world besides*. . . .

There is a kind of satisfaction in admitting one's guilt, in confession to oneself the perpetration of a crime; a kind of satisfaction, I say—but not peace. I have tried them, admission and self-condemnation, but the peace has not come. . . . I live on from day to day hoping, although there may be nothing better in store for me, that the worst is past."

Thursday: "This evening's paper had a long article on the coffee industry. The work of our house in Costa Rica was dwelt on at length. I did not know when Nelson was talking with me that he was collecting material for publication. I might not have been so communicative; I hardly think that I would. He comments at length on the good wages we pay our laborers, the sanitary conditions of their quarters, and the precautions taken against disease. All this will please Gertrude when she reads it; she has great sympathy for the poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed. She

loves everything that God has made—except me. . . . After all, I'm glad Nelson got the facts and wrote this. Gertrude will see that I have carried out her suggestions and will be pleased.

"How often we talked this over together! and much we thought of then is now a fact accomplished. But I would give it all—all the fruition of these schemes, for the bygone days we sat together discussing them. Far happier was I with her, planning, than alone, possessing!"

Just here he laid down his diary to answer a knock at the door. It was Jerry with his brush and polish. Morrison drew a sigh of relief—it was not a "pale face" for whom he would have to make conversation. Jerry made his own conversation, or rather he was a monologist, who talked to hear himself talk —Eliza Jane said—and made no embarrassing requirements of his audience.

But to Morrison he was a link with home and those *other days,* and was never in his way; he could clean windows, polish mirrors, and talk, too, as much as he pleased!

But Jerry was a long time coming to loquaciousness to-day. He seemed to have much unfinished humming to do. This low, indistinct carrying of a tune, with his partly closed lips, was his habit when very intent on his occupation.

Curtman was disappointed, for often Jerry, with a few words helped him make a vivid picture of home; his etching he, himself, would fill in with all the strokes and tones necessary for a glowing life-like picture. If Jerry said Gertrude had been in the kitchen that day reading a receipt to Eliza Jane, he straightway pictured her in her pretty morning frock, looking fresh and sweet; for Gertrude—in the kitchen instructing servants, or in the parlor entertaining guests, in full evening toilets or

domestic dress—looked always beautiful and dainty. If Jerry had waited while she finished a letter for him to mail, he straightway portrayed her at the writing desk, intent on her occupation, her shapely white hand racing along the paper, or hovering quietly above it while she paused and thought, sometimes with serious face, sometimes smiling.

And Gertrude wrote such good letters! During their married life they had been so seldom separated, that he had only had a few from her, but they were stamped on his memory, not their exact words, but their general intent, their motif, and *it* was always tender, loving, and true. Why had he not kept them? he asked himself—again why should he have kept her *letters* when he had *her!*

Curtman at last despaired of Jerry's opening up a conversation and took himself the initiative.

"You take a great deal of pains with your

work, Jerry; those brasses look as bright as new. It takes you a long time to burnish all of them, here in the house, doesn't it?"

"My land, Boss, I doan wuk on the rest uv 'em hard like I duz yourn." Jerry smiled a meaning smile. "Now I doan mean ter say that I *slight* the rest uv 'em, fer I doan. I never slight my wuk, no time—never. But I jest doan aim to do nobody else's as good as yourn. I jest never 'gree with myseff that I'm goin' to do the rest uv 'em as well, an' it ain't slightin' enything ef you haven't ever promised yerseff to do it better."

Jerry it seemed made mental reservations in his labor contracts!

"I likes to give your wuk extra teches, Boss, an' it ain't 'cause you're always givin' me sumthin', nuther. It's 'cause I'se got a fam'bly pride in you. We is connecktet thru Miss Gertrue, you kno'. When you married Miss Gertrue uv course we had to take you in, too.

An' when you is onct in our fam'bly you can't git out."

"I thank you for your interest, Jerry," replied Morrison. "I'm glad you have it, and—for the reason you give."

Jerry accepted the encouragement and, resuming his polishing, kept on intermittently with his remarks.

"Boss, there's some laidees here in this house whut's got their mines turn to'ards you; after ketchin' you—them laidees from New York."

"That's hard to believe, Jerry."

"It's a fac', Boss; I kno' wimen, leastwise I kno' somethin' 'bout 'em. Nobody doan kno' 'em altogether. They's funny—wimen is. You think sometimes you'se got 'em by h'art an' all uv a suddent they's gone off like a blast fuse when you ain't 'spectin' it. They mind me uv a mule. I doan mean no disrespec' to the laidees, but they does. When you

ain't a-lookin' they jump sideways an' kick up 'bout somethin' you doan know whut. I ain't been married sixteen year fur nothin'. My Didamy's 'bout the best 'oman in the worle, but she sho' do sometimes jump sideways an' kick up over nuthin'. Maybe she gits pisened with niggers' talk an' think I'se dun somethin' I ain't. You can't tell."

"That may be the case," assented Morrison.

"Now 'bout these New York laidees," continued Jerry. "One day las' week I wuz in tharr a-cleanin' they brasses. It's my rule never to do my wuk when the roomers are occerpents; but it wuz a rainy day an' they didn't go out that day, but it wuz my reg'lar day fur they room an' I didn't wanter turn out o' my tracks. Ef you turn out uv yer tracks fur ev'rything, you never get nowharr. So when I knock an' they say 'Come in,' I jest take off my hat an' ask soff like ef

I could polish they brasses. They say 'Yes, Sambo.' I didn't instruct 'em eny better, fur I wuzn't kerrin' ef they did call me 'Sambo' ef I got to do my wuk."

Jerry stopped while he gave some extra rubbing to the tips about the mantel.

"An' they wuz guyin' one 'nuther an' tellin' jokes; though they old enough to be solemner than they is, leastwise the mother is.

"They ask me some questions 'bout the folks whut boards here, nuthin' out uv the way; ef Mrs. Martin's little gurl wuz over the so' thro't an' how wuz ole Mr. Cowen. Las' one uv 'em ask me ef you go out much in sassiety. I know'd then they'd been heddin' up to'ads you. They wuz back uv me, but I could see in the lookin' glass that they wuz laffin', low like, so I couldn't heyr 'em. 'He's a han'som gen'lman, they 'lowed, an' sed they 'spec you'd be very exceptionable in sassiety.

"'He sho' is han'some,' I sez, 'an' would

suttenly be exceptionable ef he went; but he doan *go.*'

"'Oh, I doan expec' you kno', Sambo,' sez that tallest one whut warres all them beads roun' her neck.

"'Yes, I duz,' I sez, 'I knows all 'bout the Boss. He's my kin'!

"With this they both bust out laffin' like they wuz at a circus an' me a clown. You see they's frum way off no'th yon'er an' doan kno', so I had to explane to 'em 'bout the 'lationship. 'It ain't no use fur no laidees to be makin' up to the Boss,' I sez, 'fur they is surely a-wastin' they time'! Then they went a-talkin' 'bout other things, but I seen 'em makin' eyes at one 'nuther in the glass. They didn't fool me—I'm hard to fool."

"Oh, well, I'm out of the question, Jerry; they would not think seriously of me. They have too much sense, too much principle, too, I hope."

"I dunno; it ain't ev'rybody whut's got both uv 'em, sense an' princ'ple both—enyway when they's thinkin' 'bout marryin'. You kin jest notice an' see ef I ain't right. You watch that one whut wears that long string uv white beads."

"Gems."

"Is they gems? I dunno. I dunno gems when I see em!"

"Ah, well," said Curtman to himself, "there are other people in the world who don't know gems when they see them!"

The following day when Morrison returned from business he found his colored friend standing at his door.

"I jest waitin' fur you, Boss."

"So I see," answered Morrison. "Come in," he continued, opening the door and preceding him. "What can I do for you, Jerry?"

"Now you kno', Boss, I'm the las' pussun

in the wurl, the very *las'* pussun, to hurry up enybody 'bout a present. I'm a gen'lman ef I am a nigger. But it's this way; you sed you had some close I might have, an' I jest thot ef it suit you I'd come an' take 'em out uv yer way."

"Certainly, Jerry, certainly; I don't know what I've been thinking of, not to have given them to you before. It was careless of me, very careless; but my wits go 'wool gathering' these days. I'm getting old and doted before I'm forty. There they are, hanging to the right in the wardrobe."

Jerry took down the garments indicated. "Well, this is suttenly a fine lot o' close you give me, Boss, an' I sho am obleeged." And the expression of his face corroborated his statement.

"But it's this way, Boss, an' you mus' understan' that I ain't a-criticisin', but I do wish you hadn't fell off like you is. Your close

use to fit me jest like they's made for me, an' I wuz the bes'-dressed col'd gen'lman in town! But now it's es much es I kin do to git into the coat and vest, an' Didamy, she has to splice the pants in the back."

"Yes, I've lost flesh."

"You remember that han'some gray coat you give me las' spring?"

"I can't recall it now, Jerry."

"Well, *you* may disremem'er it, but I doan. I never kin. It wuz so tite on me that Jim Taylor—Jim whut waits on you in the dinin'-room—sed he'd give me one he had fur it. Swap! He 'lowed some white man give him his'n. I doan kno' whether he did or not, they wuz nuthin' but cheap han'-me-downs. It makes me mad ev'ry time I think uv how that Jim Taylor cheat me in that trade. He never had sich a coat on his back in all his born days as the one I let him have, an' the one I got frum him wuz a sight; it wuz pos'tive

redicilis. I look like a nigger ev'ry time I put it on!"

"Well, I hope you will fare better in your next exchange, if you find one necessary."

"I'll tell you, Boss, ef you wuz to have ez good suppers ez I had las' night you'd suttenly pick up. I wouldn't have no more tr'uble wearin' your close."

"Were you at a swell function last night, Jerry?"

"Land no; they doan fatten you at 'em what you say. I et at Miss Gertrue's!"

Morrison looked up from the evening paper which he had opened and begun reading. "Did you take supper there? Did she have a party?" he asked.

"No, it wuzn't no party—jest four or five, an' Lizerjane got Didamy come help her. The butler an' the housemaid doan kno' nuthin', leastwise they doan let on like they duz, an' ez fur the coachman, he won't tech

nuthin' but them hosses an' the cair'ge. But you 'member C'lumbus."

"Yes, I remember Columbus."

"But he sho' do keep that cair'ge clean an' them hosses lookin' like satin. I kin say that fur him. An' them chains on the harness he jest rubs 'em till they looks like gole. But Miss Gertrue pays him nuff fer it; she say 'C'lumbus got to live.' You kno' Miss Gertrue!

"But that supper," resumed Jerry after a little pause, "it wuzn't none of your caperer's suppers wharr they counts so many hedd uv folks an' so many plates uv vittels, an' ef one more pussun wuz to come, tharr wouldn't be nuthin' fur him to eat. No, sir, Miss Gertrue doan have that kine. There wuz plenty fur ev'rybody, an' it wuz good to boot. Whut Didamy an' Lizerjane doan kno' 'bout cookin' ain't wuth kno'in'. I lived with a caperer onct, an' he jest fix bare nuff for sich an' sich com-

p'ny, but Miss Gertrue jest give you a blank cart to git things t'gether with, an' tharr's plenty fur ev'rybody an' more too. Them caperers can't make nuthin' tase right nuther. How kin they?—they never has no cook—they jest has a chef, an' a chef doan kno' how to cook! No, it wuzn't no party," Jerry concluded, as he reached the door, "jest Miss'er Collins an' two er three mo'."

"Mr. Collins?" asked Morrison, "Granville Collins of New York? *Is he here again?*"

"Yes, sir; he's bin here more'n a week—right here in the hotel. I thot you seen him."

This announcement was for Morrison food for thought, or rather, for misery. He read no more in the paper. It was past midnight before he went to bed, and later still when he went to sleep.

CHAPTER IX

"The frost gleams where the flowers have been."

CURTMAN sat through the deepening twilight in one of the city's breathing-places, one of the down-town squares, whose grass and trees were a pleasing surprise to the passengers on the cars that rattled by during the day, and whose rustic chairs were a continual suggestion of rest to weary pedestrians, both day and night. He *seemed* oblivious to his surroundings, but he was not; he saw the unkempt children tumbling about on the grass not far off; and near by, belated workmen with their dinnerpails beside them, resting and talking before resuming their homeward jaunt. In fact, he had come purposely to this little square, bearing throughout its length and breadth the

stamp of democracy, to be free from the intrusion of his friends. He was not in the mood to *entertain* them to-night, and was loath to have his reputation for good-comradeship suffer. Though one may *have* the wit, it is not always easy to *play* the rôle of Yorick!

He sat on, until the laborers had resumed their trudge, the unkempt children crept off to their homes, and the lights along the sidewalks, in shops, and apartments had been set aglow. Among the advertisements, that flashed out in little burning disks along the street opposite, was one that arrested his attention, announcing in revolving letters, "Art Loan Exhibit." He recalled now, having heard this exhibit talked of, by the men about him that took interest in such matters, and also recalled that he had resolved to go—for a purpose—and was glad to find it now in progress, and within such easy reach. He arose at once, and with the firm, quick step of one who has something more

in view, than strolling through rooms of pictures and bric-a-brac, crossed the street. He ascended the steps, but stopped a moment on the landing.

"Is a card of invitation necessary?" he asked.

"Only a dollar," replied the doorkeeper.

"I'm glad to hear that—I feared you were exclusive, that you were keeping out the *canaille.*"

"The dollar will do that," replied the doorkeeper.

Curtman was not much interested in the display about him. He might have been more so, had he not had something on his mind. He examined nothing critically, keeping close to the door, that he might see the people come in. He was evidently looking for someone, whose non-appearance was a disappointment. Later on he sauntered through the rooms, the look of quest still on his face.

Presently he found himself behind Gertrude and Mrs. Gilbert. The look of quest was gone! They were examining some vases. Gertrude reached out her hand toward one of them, and as she did so he saw the flash of a diamond on her finger.

"Is that the ring I gave her?" he asked himself eagerly. "Can it be possible she still wears *that*—I must see at all hazards." And drawing as close as he dared, suiting his gait to theirs, followed on, moving when they moved, halting when they halted. Mrs. Gilbert fell a little to the rear, and after a while drifted to the other side of the room. It was Curtman's chance to get nearer still to Gertrude, and see again the ring. She was leaning over, carefully inspecting the painting on an easel just within the cordon—evidently not missing Mrs. Gilbert from her side.

"Yes, this is the picture of which I've been

telling you," she said, and, turning, looked directly in—Curtman's eyes.

For a moment she was disconcerted. "I—I—thought you were my friend," she said, and turning back, resumed her walk.

"Oh, I am your friend—I am your friend, Gertrude," were the words that struggled in his heart, but they did not cross his lips. He hesitated, and in the brief moment of hesitancy his opportunity was gone. Mrs. Gilbert had rejoined Gertrude, and they were walking away.

He stood looking after them in a helpless, dazed way until they were lost in the crowd.

"My opportunity! my opportunity!" he said half aloud, "and—and it is gone, and *she is gone.* Why did I not say, 'I am your friend, Gertrude—it is no mistake you make—I am your friend'?" He turned, faint, and leaned for support on something at his side.

It was the pedestal of a bronze urn. "Be careful, sir!" said the guard, who came along that instant—"you are blocking the way, move on."

And Curtman did move on—through rooms that might have been empty barracks or rude caravansaries, so far as he was concerned. Lost on him were the bronzes, sculptures, and paintings the dilettanti had for weeks been collecting and arranging. When he did realize his surroundings, the impression made was that of a confused bazaar, over which streamed the radiance of many a garish chandelier—a stifling place that he hastened to leave.

On reaching the open air he walked on and on as one in a dream—block after block in the very opposite direction to that he should have taken for his room. Somehow, his feet in his abstraction, traversed the path along which it was wont to journey of mornings to his business house. When within a few yards of it,

realizing his whereabouts, he turned toward his hotel, but seeing two men emerging from the door, stepped into the shadow of a projecting wall to wait until they were gone.

"Stebbs and Larkins," he said to himself. "They have been looking over the books, I suppose—why could they have not done it in the day, in my presence? I would not have cared."

A report of the enterprise in which these two men were engaged, the commencement of a similar house to that of Curtman & Co., had reached him, as well as the fact, that they were arranging to take into their employ some of the best of his force, and divert to themselves some of the supplies he was accustomed to receive. He had never made use of the information brought him, direct and reliable though it was.

"Let it go," he had said; "we shall see what it will come to."

So, to-night, when he saw them emerging from the building, in a covert, secret way, he felt no surprise, and, strange to say, no resentment. They walked past without seeing him —this was all he cared for now, and when they were gone he retraced his steps, this time continuing to his room.

To-night's were the saddest of his many sad reveries. Somehow he felt as if an opportunity for reconciliation with Gertrude had been given him, and he had thrown it away, a time in which to plead, and he had remained silent. Her voice and words, "I thought you were my friend," kept ringing in his ears —he could not silence them, nor banish from his memory the expression in her eyes when she looked in his and said, "I thought you were my friend." "Oh, Gertrude! I am your friend, no matter though you may think me your deadliest foe. I am not, I am your friend—I am more, I am your husband—you

are my wife. Oh, why did I not say all this to her there and then. What matter if the gaping crowd did see me. Why did I not clasp her in my arms, regardless of their jeers or tears. What are they, or the whole world to me, compared with her? . . . But she might have repulsed me; she might have thrown me away with the scorn I deserve. No matter, I would have tried, I would have done my best; *this* regret would not have been added to my woe. And," here his features, tense with pain, relaxed into content and peace, "she might have *forgiven me*—and to have her forgiveness is worth a thousand efforts. Gertrude's forgiveness! I know what her forgiveness means—a sincerity, real and whole-souled, not shallow words. I know how once, when she had been deeply wronged, she accepted again to her respect and love the offenders. I counseled hauteur, and the bare exchange of courtesies! 'Not so,' she pro-

tested, 'not so; forgiveness must be entire, sincere, and everlasting, like Christ's.'"

Some leaden streaks of the coming dawn, had crept up in the far-off horizon before Curtman lay down to rest. His sleep, for all it was calm and sound, kept him no longer in bed than usual—his accustomed hour found him in his accustomed place, his hand steady with his pen, his mind clear in its reasoning. He had more than his usual business to transact that day, but got through with it all, satisfactorily to himself and to all concerned. Larkins and Stebbs had an interview with him —it was not what they had expected, but kept within the lines that *he* had planned it should. Their project had failed, and they had come to explain—to forestall any disclosure that might be made, keeping in the background, of course, all they had done derogatory to his interests. They had dreaded the interview, expecting to find Curtman uncompromising

and austere, but he was neither; on the contrary, approachable and kindly. It was a natural thing, he said, for a man to commence for himself a business similar to the one with which he was familiar—he had done it himself, he said, moreover, had kept on good terms with his old employers, and they had both succeeded. "If the men withdrawing go about it in an honorable way and do the old firm no injury, nothing disparaging can be said or thought." Stebbs and Larkins both looked down at this juncture.

In a little while the interview was over. They had counted upon surrender of their stock and dismissal for themselves. On the contrary, they were allowed to remain stockholders, and they themselves were retained on the same good salaries they had heretofore received.

They looked at each other as they walked away.

"What do you think of that, Stebbs?" asked Larkins.

"I don't know. I don't know what to think. I was looking to be fired."

"I guess you were. I was looking for us both to be fired—stock recalled and everything!"

"What's come over Curtman?"

"I can't tell you, I don't know."

"Curtman is a strange man—he has his faults."

"Yes, and he has some things that are *not* faults."

Curtman's physical exhaustion was greater than ordinary that night, and yet he sat longer than was his wont by the window and said more than was his custom to his diary. . . .

"I am tired and wearied with my work and cares. How often in the days gone by, when I came home thus, have I lain with my head in *her* lap, *her* hand with its gentle touch

smoothing my brow, *her* eyes looking down into mine, reading there a love as deep and pure as her own. I can see the look in her eyes, I can feel the touch of her hand and her kisses pressed on lips that had never lied to her. These all come back to me—again and again they come, in the garish day and the silent night. Sometimes she read to me, her fingers turning deftly the pages, to the passages I liked, her voice with skillful modulation and well-placed accent bringing out the beauty of the lines before her. She did not know—we neither of us knew then—that it was of me, not Childe Harold, she read:

"The tree will wither long before it fall;
The hull drives on though mast and sail be torn."

. . . . .

"The day drags through though storms keep out the sun,
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on."

. . . . .

" . . bloodless with sleepless sorrow aches,
Yet withers on till all without is old,
Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold."

"Fame
May for a moment soothe, it cannot slake
The fever of vain longing, and the name
So honored but assumes a bitterer claim!"

"Yes, '*The fever of vain longing!*'

"Oh, Gertrude! Gertrude! will you not come down from your pinnacle of happiness and peace to save me? Are you so unlike the God you worship that there is with you never forgiveness?"

CHAPTER X

"How exquisite thy voice would come,
My darling, on this lonely air!"

A FEW days later, Morrison's solicitude and sorrow were renewed on seeing Collins in Gertrude's company.

They were on the street walking slowly, so earnestly engaged in the topic under consideration—whatever it was—that they passed without seeing him.

Tuesday: "I passed Gertrude on the street to-day—so close I could have touched her with my outstretched hand, but she did not see me. No wonder; she was with Granville Collins and so had eyes for no one else! . . . What can they have of mutual interest, so intense that they must needs go along the highway, oblivious to the world around them? . . . Of course it is no concern of

mine, no more mine than the veriest stranger's in the throng they passed, but I can but wonder what it means. . . . I am disappointed, sorely disappointed—*in Gertrude.* I have come to believe that she will marry. It grieves me beyond expression and it—shocks me. . . . I would not have believed this of Gertrude; it lowers her in my regard, and yet, I *love her!* Can it be possible I must love her on and she married to another? . . . She *stoops* to marry. . . . What can she find in Granville Collins to admire, to love? . . . I thought I had reached the lowest rung of distress, but we can never be sure of that. This is another downward step for me, into what seems now, an unfathomable abyss. I long ago discovered that I had not wholly resigned her; that somehow, in some sense, I still believed her mine; some subtle, indescribable tie I fancied still bound us. To relinquish this is more than grief or sorrow, it is woe."

Thursday: "Mrs. Bramlet is with Gertrude now; I saw them driving to-day. Some young girl was with them. These I suppose were the other guests at her dinner. . . . I cannot say Mrs. Bramlet *refused* to speak to me. She may not have seen me, but I believe she did. Gertrude gave me her usual salutation. How could she when she is on the eve of marrying another man! . . . I cannot wish her happiness. . . . I wish, indeed, that I could hate her!" . . .

Friday: "What an outrage to have made such an entry as that of yesterday, 'I wish I could hate her'!—to have said such a thing to my diary! No, I will not erase it, I will let it stay—to turn to and read some day when I am tempted to think better of myself than I should. It will remind me what I really am; what manner of metal is beneath the polish, what kind of wood under the veneering! . . ."

Morrison's life, with its multitudinous business cares and consequent weariness, which precluded, (had he been disposed to their practice), all strenuous or athletic sports, had fallen into one of treadmill routine. The routine was seldom varied—the work of the business house during the day; his dinner and walk in the evening; at night his smoke and reverie in the hall, whose window opened toward Gertrude's home, where the light of her bedroom lamp glowed like a star. He had almost come to consider this special spot in the hostelry his private property, his boudoir. Others seemed to so regard it, too, and seldom interrupted him in the enjoyment of its privacy. Sometimes, the children in the hotel, would venture up for a sideways glance at the man, who so silently and quietly sat gazing out of the window—at *nothing* it seemed to them; or now and then some new guest would stroll up, and for a moment look out on the

gloaming, pierced with a thousand needle-points of light, revealing, though indistinctly, the spires of churches, and domes and turrets of public, or ambitious business houses. As he sat to-night at the window, his thoughts were with his heart, and both, like the dying gladiator's, were with the woman he loved. The rude barbarians and their Dacian mother were no dearer to the poor captive, "butchered to make a Roman holiday," than was she who sat beside that lamp to him. What was she doing? or saying? or reading? Did she ever think of him?

From such musing as this Curtman was suddenly aroused by a woman's voice.

Could it be possible, that in his reveries he had dwelt so intently on Gertrude that his thoughts, penetrating the space between, had obtruded on her brain—that she had called his name, and through all the intervening distance he had heard!

It was a sweet but brief illusion; he heard his name again, more distinctly called this time and closer than before. He turned and saw approaching—almost at his chair, Helen Landray.

Her face was covered with smiles, as she neared him, with extended hands.

"Well, Mr. Curtman," she exclaimed with mock reproachfulness, "you are difficult to find; the servant has twice brought my card back from your room reporting you not in. So I thought I would look you up myself, and behold, I have found you. When a woman makes a *quest* she makes a *find.* What are you doing away up here in this little lonesome, out-of-the-way place, all by yourself?"

Morrison neither arose nor offered his hand.

"I can sit down, I suppose," she said, drawing from its desuetude in an angle near by a chair, and seating herself.

"If you choose," he replied.

"And a cat can look at a king?" she asked demurely.

"You don't seem a bit glad to see me," she continued after she had given him time to respond to her pleasantry and he had not responded, "but men have their humors and tantrums, just like the women, and they have to be petted out of them—just like the women."

There was another silence, which Morrison broke this time.

"When did you and Varnon marry? Soon after I saw you in New York, I suppose."

"Oh! we did not—marry at all," she hesitated. "I thought you had heard——"

"I heard that Varnon was broke. I didn't think of it, but might have known the rest—it's the way with women of your sort."

"Oh, it was not that; it was not the money at all."

"He left you, then, of his own sweet will?"

"No."

"It's still a running engagement? If so I advise you to run him down, and marry him, as soon as you can."

"I never see him; I never care to see him. It is all over with us. I found it impossible to get my own consent to marry him. Oh, it's hard, hard to be tied to somebody who is not thoroughly *en rapport* with you."

"Well, you have indeed set for yourself a difficult task—to find someone thoroughly *en rapport* with you, somebody that will *stay*. Or is staying a requisite with you?"

"I want the man I love; I have come for him now." She spoke intently, and leaning forward placed her hands on the arm of his chair. "You know that love never dies."

"That is true, love never dies, but lust does; like the worm that creeps up out of the mud in which it was hatched, it lives out its little day

and is gone; but love, like a star, glows on undimmed; even though hidden behind a cloud, it is *still there.*"

Mrs. Landray removed her hands from the chair and folded them in her lap. There was a little silence, during which they both looked out into the darkness, where here and there, sometimes singly, sometimes in clusters, the lights glittered like fireflies.

She had not looked for this at his hands. Her reception was far from what she had anticipated. She could have made cutting rejoinders in plenty if she had chosen; she lacked neither the cleverness, nor material out of which to fashion them. But what end would it serve? she asked herself; why jeopardize what little hold she had on him by a return in kind of his sarcasm? It would be dear-bought gratification of her anger.

No, she would not make the replies at her tongue's end no matter how richly merited.

Nor would she be overcordial at present; this was not the time; she might be later on, when his mood was different. She would make herself agreeable, as any other woman might, on non-committal topics.

This resolution was crystallized, in the silence that followed his caustic speech.

"It is five years since I lived here," she began bravely with her rôle, "but the time has gone by rapidly. . . . It has gone rapidly with you, too, has it not?"

"No; it has dragged through centuries with me."

"And there have been many changes."

"Yes."

There was another pause.

"How interesting your coffee plantations must be! I have often fancied it would be delightful to make a little journey through Central America, a land teeming with such varied interests; the curios and prehistoric

relics for the serious-minded traveler, and the present strange people with their curious methods of existence for those of lighter vein."

Another pause.

"I hear that you have been wonderfully prosperous in your business there; that your Mexican employees have responded to your generosity with excellent work, and that 'Don Curtman' is now a millionaire!"

"Yes."

This is the reply he made her; to himself he said, "But you will never get the use of a dollar of it," which statement was erroneous, and goes to show how little we can tell what is coming to pass; how our affirmations often become negations, for she did get the use of many dollars of it!

"Well, what are you doing with yourself this summer, Mr. Curtman?" she began again with persistent bravery. "Surely you

are not going to stay the season through here in the city with the heat and mosquitoes? We are going to the seashore, a delightful party of us; some of them are here with me now. Join us at Atlantic City next month, won't you? You remember the summer we met there once? the swimming, the yachting, the suppers? Oh! it was grand. The seashore is the place for me; the throngs of people, the salty air, and the surf inviting you to a wrestle. You are a fine swimmer and enjoy all this. Say you will come. Surely——"

"You ask me where I will spend my summer?" Curtman interrupted. "Right here, in this city, and a great deal of it right here at this window. Not a night goes by, that I do not sit and look at that light as long as it burns—that light to the right of that group," and with outstretched hand he indicated the pale, rosy glow, that in the perspective, was some yards distant from its nearest neighbors.

"That is her lamp, the lonely lamp by which *my wife* sits."

Mrs. Landray could not resist the temptation, for all she had promised herself to leave unnoticed his insults. He had placed himself so defiantly in reach of her lance, and she saw so plainly the crevice in his armor!

"Perhaps," she said, "it is not such a *lonely* lamp after all; maybe—Other gentlemen have admired your wife——"

Curtman turned on her fiercely, a glare in his eyes.

"What do you mean! What are you saying!" he exclaimed. "But I forget; you cannot—it is impossible for *you* to understand her. There is nothing compromising even in appearances with her, much less in her life." After a pause he continued, his voice still tense with anger.

"I repeat it, *you* cannot understand her—she is as pure as a ray of sunshine."

"You rush to conclusions not thought of," said Mrs. Landry calmly; "there would be nothing compromising if *her husband* were sitting with her by her lamp, would there? I heard she was to be married, and the ceremony may have been performed for all we know; neither of *us* would have been invited to the wedding. I have heard she was to marry Granville Collins. Your wife may now be Mrs. Collins—the protection of her fair name may belong to another man!"

The fierceness died from his face—the glare in his eyes faded to humility. He had no longer the look of a beast at bay, but of one wounded to its death. She saw that the lance had entered the crevice and that she had carried the day, but did not exult; on the contrary, she ignored her victory. Her old philosophy returned. Where the good in keeping up a warfare? She had not abandoned all hope—she might yet ensnare him. But to do this,

lance and dagger must be laid aside, and she must be amiable—always, and under all circumstances, amiable.

"Now, think it over and join us at Atlantic City. I shall expect you," she said, and as she swept down the hall saw to it that a smile was on her face. She looked back over her shoulder, so that Curtman, if he should turn, would see the smile, and know that she bore him no unkindly grudge!

A large mirror, reaching from floor to ceiling, above which blazed a cluster of electric bulbs, made a panel of the wall, past which she must go, on her way to her room. She paused in front of it, and regarded herself with unstinted admiration. No wonder! Its gilded rim had never, for all it had hung there many a year, framed in a prettier picture. She came nearer, almost close enough for the smiling lips to touch their duals.

"All is not lost that is in danger, Helen,"

she said, nodding to the woman in whose eyes she was looking; "there is something good in store for you yet; there are possibilities in Curtman for all he is so glum, and if he should never return, there is many another to recognize your beauty!" Mrs. Landray was no prophetess, yet there was something good in store for her; something far better than the things she had well-nigh wrecked her life to gain.

CHAPTER XI

"Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear."

JERRY and his wife often found themselves spending the evening in Mrs. Curtman's kitchen. Eliza Jane and Didama were on excellent terms, notwithstanding their relationship, having long ago concluded there was no necessity that on account of it they should always be at enmity. After a few passages at arms, back in the past (in the days when the new relationship was being adjusted), they had concluded to bury the hatchet, and had been for many years a living evidence of its pleasant possibilities.

They often enjoyed a dish of news together, and still more the other dishes that were frequently in evidence. Many a tooth-

some viand appeared on Gertrude's table, which, untasted by her, passed on to other and more appreciative palates. Gertrude knew and provided for it. But this evening's social intercourse was not interrupted by the serving of refreshments.

Jerry and Didama had scarcely arrived before Columbus too walked in.

"How do you fine yourself this evenin', Mr. Wheeler?" asked Jerry as Columbus, drawing up a chair, made himself one of the group.

"Well, I've not been in the best of health lately, Mr. Sefton; I have had the influenza."

"That is sho' nuff bad—leastwise I 'spose it is. I never had it. My mammy had me vax'nated when I wuz little."

"Well, it isn't one of the diseases vaccination prevents."

"Ain't it? I doan kno' myself; they duz so meny things these days that I can't keep

up wid em. No use tryin'. How's Mrs. Wheeler an' the chillen?"

"Very well; Mrs. Wheeler has just sent me a little memorandum to attend to before I come home. I remind myself of Mr. Curtman; he was always forgetting things, and Mrs. Curtman used to threaten making a memorandum on his cuff."

"Them was fine ole days when the Boss used to be roun' heyr," interrupted Jerry, "fine ole days, an' I wish they wuz back. I suttenly do wish he wuz roun' here agin, the head uv his house. Devose ain't 'spectable as marriage is."

"Yes, the whole establishment would be more stylish; I'd rather be in the employ of a man than a woman; it has the look of army life to be under the authority of a man."

"Go 'way, C'lumbus; you make me sick talkin' 'bout army life. Whut you kno' 'bout army life. Enybody'd think frum hearin'

you talk that you'se jest back from the Phillypines an' you never seen no Phillypines or no kine of pines in yer life 'ceptin' 'em out in the yard. Go 'way, nigger."

"Now, Brur Jerre," put in Eliza Jane, "you ain't treatin' Miss'er Wheeler right. You ought'n call him a nigger. He's col'd man."

"That's jest the pint I'm gwine ter make now. Ef a col'd man acts sens'ble that's whut I calls him, but ef he doan I calls him a nigger."

"If you would read up on the subject, you'd find there's no such word as nigger."

"Oh, I kin read ef I want ter; but it huts my eyes, an' they doan pernounce in nusepapers like I duz, nohow."

"I suspect you can't tell how I came by my name," said Columbus, who intended proving to Jerry how much he missed by neglecting books.

"No; wharr you git it?"

"I'm named for the man who discovered this country."

"Ain't he dead?"

"Long, long ago."

"Then whut good's it dun you to be name fur him? Your daddy jest waste that name. I knows better'n that; I names my chillen fur somebody whut's livin' and goin' to do somethin' fur 'em. Ise got a boy name Morrison, an' two gurls, one uv 'em name Gertrue, an' one name Kath'rn, an' they close doan cost me a cent, shoes, or hats, or nuthin'."

"But there is something in being self-respecting," remarked Columbus with dignity.

"That's jest whut I say," replied Jerry, "I'm respectin' myself so I won't have ter wuk myself to death, takin' keer uv a passell chillen when somebody do it fur me. That's whut I calls respectin' yerself. I kno's mo'

people still I'd name chillen after ef I had the chillen."

"You don't catch my idea about self-respect."

"No, an' I doan wanter ketch it; I'se got the bes' one myself. I'll keep mine."

"Oh, it's too small a matter for friends to dispute over, and as I have some little commissions to attend to, I'll move on," and turning toward the door, Columbus bade them good-evening, with the air of a man, much superior to his company and surroundings, but tolerant.

"Now that we'se by ourself," said Jerry, drawing his chair up closer to the two women, "let's talk over somethin' on my mine. It wouldn't do ter talk 'bout it wharr he wuz," motioning to the door through which Columbus had made his exit, "fur he never wuz one uv the fam'bly, an' it ain't nachul fur him to have the same feelin's 'bout the matter that *we*

has. Enyway it's all in strick conf'rence whut I say; an' ef Columbus kno' enything his wife is sho' to fine it out, an' whut she kno' the town kno' putty soon. Calline no dou'tedly is got a long tongue."

"It most suttenly is, an' hich't in the middle at that," said Eliza Jane.

"Well, here it iz. The Boss is lookin' mightly porely—that man ain't happy. He jest sets a-studyin' an' studyin', hardly noticin' enybody when they talks to him——"

"An' Miss Gertrue ain't happy nuther, like she use ter be," interrupted Eliza Jane.

"They orter make up," remarked Didama.

"Of course they orter," replied Jerry. "It ain't no use to never forgive; it ain't right. Our Lord teaches forgiveness. We *got* to forgive; no two ways 'bout it."

"Of course," said both women.

"I kno' somethin'," Jerry continued in a lowered voice, drawing his chair still closer,

and looking toward the door to be sure Columbus had not returned. "I kno' somethin', but you ain't to say nuthin' 'bout it."

"Of course we won't," the women promised in chorus.

"You 'member 'bout that Landr'y woman whut made the tr'uble?"

"I mos' suttenly do," answered Eliza Jane promptly. "I gets mad ev'ry time I thinks 'bout her. Come here from nobody kno' wharr an' gits to runnin' with her betters; makin' out like she wuz qual'ty same es Miss Gertrue."

"Whut I tell you, Lizerjane—whut I tell you that nite we went ter the pay party t'gether? Didn't fool me."

"No, an' she didn't fool me ner Mrs. Bramlet nuther. We spotted her."

"I b'lieve you!" interjected Didama, and they digressed a moment to congratulate each other on their capabilities in character reading.

"Well, she wuz back here las' month," kept on Jerry.

"That 'oman back heyr!" exclaimed both Eliza Jane and Didama.

"Well, ef she ain't got the 'surance uv old scrach hisseff," continued Didama. "How iz it you never sed nuthin' 'bout it to me, Jerre?"

"Kase I ain't lookin' fur tr'uble."

"I wouldn't a-tole nobody."

"Well, ef you doan say nuthin' nobody kin ever say you sed it. I didn't want no wild scatterin' rumers trace back ter me, an' so I jest let a passel uv weeks go by 'fore I menchun it 'tall."

"Well, maybe that *wuz* bes'," agreed Didama.

"I kno' 'twuz," Jerry replied.

"An' she back here after Mr. Cu'tmun!" said Eliza Jane.

"But she didn't git him. It wuz all jest this way: One nite when I wuz a-fixin' the

reg'ster in the hall I hear somebody come sweepin' pass me an' when I look up who you 'spose I see? Why, Mrs. Landr'y drest in the finest kine uv close an' all sorts uv dimunts. She went sweepin' up to the winder wharr the Boss wuz settin' an' I heard ev'ry word they sed. I wuzn't eavesdrappin', you understan'. That's somethin' I wouldn't do; I'se 'bove it."

"Of course you iz," agreed Eliza Jane; "you has been better raised."

"Of course you wuzn't; you got too much self-respec' fur that," said Didama.

"But here's how it wuz. When I see her go up ter wharr the Boss wuz, I jest kep' on wukin' at that reg'ster (tho' I'se dun fixed it) tell she lef'. I'se boun' ter heyr ev'ry wud they say, an' I did."

"I wish he'd a riz up an'——"

"Well, he talk putty ruff ter her, I kin tell yer. He pintedly give her to un'stan' she wuz ter keep her place. Yer kno' the Boss sho'ly

haz got putty manners, but he didn't have 'em on that nite; he never try to be thur'bred. He never shuck han's with her, he never ask her ter set down, an' all the time she wuz a-talkin' ter him he kep't his hat on an' his feet up in the winder an' keep a-lookin' out to'ads wharr Miss Gertrue live. He's allers settin' tharr uv nites a-studyin' an' studyin'. I b'leve he's studyin' 'bout Miss Gertrue."

"Of course he is," said Didama, who thought it a good opportunity to enunciate a principle: "Ain't no man whut's any 'count kin keep frum lovin' his wife."

"Well, when that 'oman lef' she turn roun' an' say to the Boss that she'd see him agin; but he say 'Not ef I see you fust.'"

"He treat her jist like she zerved!" cried Eliza Jane exultantly. "Whut would he be talkin' ter her like she a laidee fur when she ain't."

"I b'leve you!" ejaculated Didama.

"The nex' mornin' she lef' the hotel, an' I never seen her sence. Said she wuz goin' ter the seasho'."

"Miss Gertrue's goin' to the seasho', too, but she won't see her; they ain't in the same class. But 'fore she goes I'm gwine to tell her whut you jest tole me an' Didamy."

"Look here, nigger, you jest keep yer mouff shet; you'se fixin' up to git me into tru'ble. Didn't I say 'fore I begin tellin' it that it wuz in strick conf'rence?"

"Doan you worry, Brur Jerre; I ain't gwine ter git you into no tr'uble. I kno' how to tell that. We all want 'em to make up, an' it suttenly will help 'long fur Miss Gertrue to kno' the Boss ain't kerrin' fur that other 'oman. That's nacher, ain't it, Didamy?"

"I b'leve you!" replied Didama, "that suttenly is nacher, an' nacherl nacher at that."

"Well," agreed Jerry, "if whut I tole you be eny use in bringin' the Boss an' Miss Ger-

true together, I'm willin'; we orter be willin' to resk somethin' fur that. But still you go 'bout it mighty skittish, Lizerjane. Feel yer way 'long. It's a mighty ticklish job ter patch up a fuss 'tween a husben an' wife. It's like walkin' thro' a swamp; you'se on solid groun' one minit an' the nex' up ter yer knees in the mud; or like goin' some place in the dark; you think you in the right road an' the nex' you butt up agin a stump."

"I kno', Brur Jerre; it's jest like you say; but I'll tell it; I'll tell it or die."

"Now see heyr, Lizerjane, you too full uv mad to make a good job."

"Doan you be uneasy 'bout Lizerjane; she'll git tharr. I kin be es smooth es butter when I wants ter be. I ain't been cookin' fur Miss Gertrue ten year fur nuthin'. I knows how ter talk ter a laidee. You recken I talks ter *her* like I talks ter *you?* No; doan you be uneasy 'bout Lizerjane."

CHAPTER XII

"I was once congratulating a friend, who had around him a blooming family, knit together in the strongest affection."

CURTMAN spent the greater part of the summer in the city regardless of the heat and mosquitoes, making but one short absence. His presence had been required, for a few days, at their branch house in Minnesota, and while there, he passed a fortnight in the lake region. But he found that leisure bored him, and that to him vacation did not mean recreation, and so returned to his routine life, his busy hours in his office and long evening walks. Indeed he made much longer the evening walks, for it needed now more physical exhaustion to bring sleep to his pillow. He abandoned his reveries at the hall window while Gertrude was away,

but resumed them as soon as her lamp was a-glow, and, moreover, he knew the first night that it was a-glow. There was no need for him to read the society column for information. He knew before the reporters when she got back!

The Beverleys had remained all summer at their home; it was suburban; a broad-halled, big-roomed house in the midst of a large yard, and Mrs. Beverley argued that it would be folly to exchange it for cramped quarters at a fashionable resort. "We are better off and happier here" she said, "and if I have my way, here we will stay." Her husband agreed with her, and they stayed; and when in the early autumn, her friends returned and began unpacking and settling, she heartily congratulated herself that she had not been *unsettled.*

As Beverley and Curtman sat lunching together at a restaurant at the noon hour—as

they often did—Beverley engaged his friend's company for a home dinner a few days distant.

"There are no other guests expected; it's my birthday and there are very few people I'm telling my age to these days."

"With your children climbing into their teens, it's right hard to keep it hid, isn't it, Beverley? to say nothing of the gray hairs sprinkled here and there over your pate,—the 'silver threads among the gold?'"

"Well, to tell the truth, Curtman, I don't care; really one gets indifferent to the approach of age when he has a happy home. My wife and children would love me if I were as gray as a badger, or bald; *they* don't throw a man away when he reaches the 'sere and yellow leaf.' A man can laugh at the taunts and jeers of the world, when it's all right at home; he can close the door on the disagreeables of existence, shut out the cold blasts, and be filled

with content and happiness at his own fireside. I sometimes shudder to think what and where I would have been had I not married—what a prey I would have been—fool that I was—to the vampires, adventurers, and such kinds that roam about looking for weaklings! Yes," he continued after a moment's pause, "a happy home is a blessing—it might be called a wall that God builds about a man. If you give but——"

Beverley stopped short, the remark unfinished on his lips. He had turned toward Curtman and noted the pallor on his face and the sorrow in his eyes.

What had he been doing! Dilating on domestic happiness to a man who had relinquished his, had bartered it for—nothing.

"I did not think, Curtman," he said in a lowered voice. "I——"

"No apology, Beverley," he interrupted with a deprecating gesture; "don't ever

apologize to me. I often get these blows, and from the hands of friends, too. They are not intended for me, but I deserve and take them. Talk on, my friend, as much as you like and whenever you choose, of your domestic life; I like to hear you. I am not a dog in the manger. I'm not that kind of dog. The sketch you made of the inside glow at the fireside and the outside frost is good, not one line overdrawn."

"You understand then—that I did not——"

"I understand," interrupted Curtman, "and to show you that I understand, I accept your invitation to dinner."

Beverley kept his word; there were no other guests expected, and Morrison found himself with only the family at the birthday board. This made it all the pleasanter for him, and he enjoyed it as thoroughly as a plant transferred from the cellar's dusk to the warmth and brightness of a sunny window. He paid

the menu a substantial compliment; he could not recall, since his own housekeeping days, when he had eaten so heartily, nor could he tell whether it was because the dishes were really so good, or the piquant sauce of agreeable company so appetizing. No matter what, he ate, and talked, and laughed, and was for a little while his old self. But he felt through it all, like a man dreaming, with the sub-consciousness running through the dream, that he is asleep, and will awake and the happiness be gone.

After the coffee had been served the gentlemen adjourned to the library, where, undisturbed, they enjoyed each other and their cigars; for Beverley smoked in his library; he was neither afraid of scenting the curtains nor angering his wife. Mrs. Beverley explained, in her own happy style, how it was that her husband took such liberties with one of the living-rooms.

"Maybe you have heard, Mr. Curtman," she said, as they were leaving the table, "the Irishman's explanation of the luxury in which his pig was kept: 'Why, he is the gintleman that pays the rint,' he remarked. And this is our gentleman who pays the rent, or, rather, owns the house," she laughed, laying her hand on her husband's arm. "He resigns to the children and me the premises; we have the best of everything and monopolize the rest of the house. Surely he ought to have one room into which he can retreat when he wants to get rid of us, out of which he can *smoke* us, when we get too many for him and beset him like a swarm of mosquitoes.

"And then, too, Mr. Curtman," she continued, turning to Morrison, "when Lewis is a trifle moody—and the best of men are moody sometimes, you know—I can just shut him up in there with a lot of good reading and tobacco, and it's astonishing in what a fine

humor he will emerge! So you see there's 'method in my madness.'"

"Yes," replied Morrison, "much 'method' and but little 'madness.'"

The friends talked along after a desultory fashion as they smoked, often indulging in long silences, during which each busied himself with his musings; a pleasant liberty that friends can take, who understand each other too well to be wholly dependent on words for an interchange of thought.

On the table between them, placed there for their mutual use, was a tobacco jar of such quaint design and gorgeous colors, that it attracted Curtman's attention. A broken tree, of a grayish-brown color, the color of the cocoa's bark, was clasped about with a vine, whose leaves and blossoms were mosaics of brilliant shades, with here and there among them ripened berries simulated by dull, red stones.

"What a handsome jar this, Lewis," he remarked, leaning over and examining it closely. "It looks as if it were directly from the Orient, and might have served some old Persian smoker before it reached you."

"It may have done that very thing," Beverley replied. "It *is* directly from the Orient. Kantrell brought me that—poor Kantrell, who left us so suddenly and sadly."

"Yes; I was not here when he died, but can recall, as distinctly as if it were yesterday, how I was shocked on reading the announcement of his death. I got here just in time for his funeral."

"Yes, I remember; we were pallbearers together."

"I sometimes catch a glimpse of his mother, through her carriage window, as she takes her drives, and can scarcely realize that this poor, broken woman is the stately dame she was a few years back. I have never seen a sadder

face than hers, and sometimes wonder if this can indeed be the woman we used to know, whose social 'brand' was of so much consequence. She gives me never a salutation. I'm confident she means no slight; in fact, I doubt if she sees me, for she has the dazed, unseeing look of one whose mind is busy with other things than those in range of vision."

"Yes, I have observed that myself; but, as you say, she means no discourtesy; she is just a heart-broken woman—too much absorbed in her sorrow to take cognizance of the world around her. She has abandoned herself to a grief, which she neither conceals, nor tries to conceal."

"Is Kantrell's death this grief? I thought that in time all get used to death—become resigned and accept it as the inevitable. I thought that only living griefs gnaw out the heart?"

"Ah, there is the trouble; hers is a living

grief. She thinks herself responsible for his death. You know he died of dissipation."

"I was not sure, but feared so."

"And she regards herself responsible indirectly, indeed directly, for this dissipation. This may or may not be true. She broke off his marriage with the woman he loved, but did not break off the love; that was beyond her power. Whether or not this drove him to dissipation, as the phrase goes, I can't tell. I have never settled it in my own mind, how much being 'crossed in hapless love' has to do with the downward trend of a man. I once heard a man of talent and distinction, who had, for many years before he was reclaimed, abandoned himself to drunkenness, in this way account for his downward trend. But he may not have understood himself; he may have made a false diagnosis. I have many times had occasion to make observation, but have never reached a conclusion.

"Kantrell never told me what it was; but now and then, an inadvertent remark, or a more expressive silence, when such things were under discussion, made me think, that somewhere back in his past, he had had an *affaire du cœur,* from which he had never recovered."

"The marriage, had it come off, would not have been a *mésalliance,* as the term is generally received. Jennie Lane was a most estimable girl herself, and her people respectable. Kantrell met and loved her, while they lived in one of the little villages a few miles from the city—I forget its name. Afterward her father came here, to Chicago, to live. He was a man of but small means, and went into some little business that never brought him in contact with Kantrell's associates. I doubt if Mr. Lane knew, even by sight, the financiers of our 'Wall Street.' But little he cared for this, and kept on in his simple, self-respecting

way—as he does yet—earning an honest, but meager living for his family. When she first came here to live, Kantrell tried bravely to do his part. He took some of his friends to call upon her, appeared with her in public, and tried by all the persuasive arts of which he was possessed, to have his mother and sister take her up. Not they; they laughed when he gave them her address. 'We never heard of such a street!' averred Mabel Kantrell. 'If we should try to find the young lady, I'm afraid the coachman would get lost in the search,' said his mother; 'anyway we shall not risk it.'

"The Kantrells, you remember, were the reigning dynasty in society then. With their wealth, open house, and gorgeous appareling, they kept easily on the head rung of the ladder, and so secure was their footing that they could thrust back all uncongenial aspirants.

"As for poor Jennie Lane, she was not an aspirant. She knew that without money she could not climb to this giddy height; in fact, she had no such desire; she had Kantrell's love; what was there in the world besides worth having!

"Mrs. Kantrell and her daughter only met her once. Kantrell argued if they but saw her they would welcome her with open arms, that they could not resist her loveliness, and so contrived this meeting. He purchased tickets to the opera then running an engagement here, securing seats near their box. When the curtain had fallen on the last act, he turned and introduced them. For all Kantrell was so pronounced, even effusive, in his introduction, his mother and sister were merely polite in recognition. Miss Lane felt the coldness of the greeting, and knew that from that on there was a wall of ice between them: a wall they would not remove, and over which she would never

climb. But still she had Kantrell's love; why should she care!

"His inquiry the next day, concerning the impression she had made, was disposed of in a few words by his mother, who pronounced her a simple rustic miss, not to be thought of, and Mabel declared she was a country *guy*.

"Now, you wonder that Kantrell did not ignore such senseless objections and marry the girl at once. But in this, you presuppose for him much strength of character, and the possession of an independent purse; and he had neither—the strength of character nor the purse. The wealth was his mother's, and although she allowed him enough yearly to support a family, he was given to understand it would be withdrawn, if he ever married out of his *circle*. And then, too, you must not forget what a weapon of destruction is ridicule! It seems a small blade to fear, but it is sharp, incisive, and gets in between the

plates of a well-armed man and does its deadly work where mightier weapons fail. I believe that many a man that has fought bravely for his side in argument, has gone down before the telling thrusts of *ridicule*. And then, too, Miss Kantrell married a man who added his moiety, too, of contempt for this 'Maud Muller,' George had picked up somewhere and brought to town!

"The marriage of Miss Kantrell was altogether to the mother's taste. Whartlet was much esteemed in the smart set, a veritable Beau Brummel in attire, and with it all a man of fine business qualities. As for these business qualities, it was remarkable, how fine, and many they were. It was astonishing, how rapidly he forged along in acquiring stock, bonds, real estate, and other evidences of industriously used business talents."

Curtman laughed. "I have reason to remember how he 'forged' along," he said.

"You recall it all, then—how he embezzled, defrauded, and got so much money from so many people that the law, for all it is so lenient with the rich, had to deal with him. His indebtedness reached out so far that his wife's money wouldn't cover it, and he got the sentence he deserved.

"Now, while this Maud Muller's father is still working at his little business, a business too little to be rated by the agencies, he gets, as he works along, his air and sunshine straight from the heavens, not filtered in through prison bars.

"As for poor Jennie, hers was a case of broken heart, and it took her to her grave. That is, Kantrell so thought, and from him I learned all this I give you. He often talked with me about this episode, which confidence I humored, as it seemed to bring relief—this molding of his sorrow into words.

"He carried, though, a brave front toward

the world—he did the best he could to hide his wound, and now his friends recall him as a merry fellow, the wit of all their dinners, a very repository of jests."

CHAPTER XIII

"Long, but not loud, the memory of the gone
Breathed through her lips a sad and tremulous tune."

. . . . .

" . . . is a thing
Which by its stillness warns me to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring."

THIS chapter from his friend's life deeply interested Curtman, but did not surprise him. It was but the corroboration of the suspected love affair, though the love affair itself had been one of far more seriousness than he had dreamed. When he left Beverley, he did not leave the story; it went with him, as he walked homeward. While he waited on the corner for a downtown car, one approached from the opposite direction, whose suburban route would take him past the cemetery. This he boarded instead, that he might go to Kantrell's grave.

It was a long ride, given to painful retrospection, but after a while a dark line of evergreens in the distance outlined the silent city, and a little later he reached the entrance. The iron gate was open, and beside it sat a little flower vender, mutely lifting her wares to the passers-by. Curtman stopped and bought a bunch of roses to lay on Kantrell's grave; he had not been there since he had helped to lay him in it years ago, but remembering the location of the family lot, turned his steps in that direction.

He journeyed along, slowly and thoughtfully, now and then stopping to read an inscription on the monuments that lined his path.

Beverley's sad story, with its obvious moral, had predisposed him to criticism, and he could but note how here around him, in abundant evidence, pride and love of fame were brought to the very gates of death, as shaft

after shaft, rising high in air, claimed for the name it bore, even in death, the "pride of heraldry and pomp of power."

But there was, too, many a simple stone in his path bearing only name and date, sometimes as well a "holy text" which said to all that stopped to read, "That Life is ever lord of Death."

There was certainly round about him on every side much on which to moralize, and Morrison did moralize—after a fashion—and through his thoughts ran a sentiment much akin to gratitude. "She still lives, she still lives," he said again and again to himself; "it might be worse—she might be *here,* but she still lives!"

The intervening shrubs and vines had so obscured the grave he sought, that he was at its side before perceiving that someone was there before him, a woman sitting at its foot, dressed in the deepest habiliments of grief. After a

moment's scrutiny he recognized in her Kantrell's mother.

"Pardon this intrusion, Mrs. Kantrell," he said. After a moment's hesitancy, he added, "I have brought some flowers to lay on my friend's grave."

"It is no intrusion," she replied, giving him her hand. "I am glad to see someone who cared for him. You helped us lay him here five years ago. Do you know that it was five years ago yesterday?"

"I had not thought—it scarcely seems so long."

"It has dragged along with me like a century, so broken-hearted and miserable have I been!"

Morrison had placed the roses on the grave and was still standing.

"Come, be seated, Mr. Curtman," she continued, making room for him beside her on the settee. "Stay with me a little while; it's a

respite, though momentary—a kind of relief, to have with me someone, who can in some measure, comprehend my grief——"

"I can understand——"

"Not all," she interrupted, "you cannot understand it all. . . . You see how I have strewn it with flowers," she pointed to the grave on which lay hundreds of hyacinths and violets. "I cover it, I try to hide it from my sight; for I dug it. . . . I dug the other, too —hers; and I put flowers on them both. I hide them both; I hate to look on them—they hurt my eyes; I kept them apart while they were living—too proud to receive, as his wife, a woman who never saw the day that she was not better than I. . . . But I was not alone in my cruelty—not that it makes my blame the less—I was valiantly aided and abetted by my daughter and her husband. And now her husband, who scorned an alliance with the daughter of an honest man, is an *imprisoned thief!*

And I am glad. You may think it diabolical when I tell you that I am glad—that it gives me pleasure to know he is behind grated windows, but it is true."

"Ah! well, you do not mean——"

"Oh! yes I do," she interrupted. "I mean just what I say, I mean that I am *glad!* My day of affecting, or hiding a sentiment, is gone. I'm not the polished, smooth-tongued woman you once knew. I'm the ugly, rugged creature you now see. When I hate, I say I hate; when I'm glad, I say I'm glad; and I'm glad, I tell you, that Whartlet is in prison. Is it strange of me? He it is who helped me dig these graves! . . . Mabel says my mind is affected, but it is not; it *has* been affected, but it is not now. It was affected when I weighed money, and class, and clothes, and society against purity and gentleness and love. My mind *was* affected then, more than affected, it was gone—I was insane. But *now,*

oh! it is sound enough now! and I look back upon the awful deeds I committed in my insanity, much as the mother with returned reason contemplates her murder of her offspring in a delirium."

Morrison did not reply at once; he could think of nothing consolatory to say. He certainly did not commend her course, and he would say nothing to justify it; yet there might be some palliation.

"Ah! well," he said at length, and with more feeling than he had intended to display, "we all have a sorrow, not the same, but still all of us a sorrow; nor is it less, in anywise, because we brought it on ourselves—our cup is none the less bitter because we got together its ingredients. But, with you," he added, "it may have been thoughtlessness——"

"Thoughtlessness! It was wickedness. Do you not believe there is such a thing as wickedness?"

"I know there is." And this time his answer was immediate and earnest.

"And pride!" she exclaimed, after a moment's abstraction. "What dreadful things we do—all of us—for the sake of pride. How like an *ignis fatuus* she lures us on—up to exalted heights, we think, but down instead to depths of woe. What misery is the heritage of her dupes. They do not walk about in their naked ugliness, they are closely kept in hiding, but for all that they *are,* and they are *many!*

"Mr. Curtman," she asked, turning and looking him directly in the face, "is it not pride, this pride that has played me false, and brought me here to my son's tomb, that keeps you and your wife apart? Why do you not forgive Gertrude?"

"Forgive her! I have nothing to forgive—nothing, absolutely nothing. You know Gertrude; how could you ask that?"

"Then why do you not beg *her* forgiveness? Too much pride? She——"

"Her forgiveness? I already have it. You do not understand, Mrs. Kantrell; neither you nor I, who bear about in our heart vindictiveness and hatred, can understand her! There are no closed chambers in her heart, in which rancor and bitterness live, poisoning with their breath the very walls that hold them. They are *all* open to the light of heaven and are clean and sweet, and she has peace, cheerfulness, and a happy home. I was once a sharer of her home, a part of her happiness, but now a wanderer, alone everywhere, happy nowhere; and with the doors of all the hostelries on earth open to me, yet always *homeless.* Do you understand now? or is it too monstrous for you to grasp—the enormity of throwing away a priceless gem that had been committed to your keeping! . . . We are indeed companions in grief," he added

after a pause. "You may have digged your son's grave—I have digged my own!"

"But you have hope," she exclaimed, "there is always hope in life. She still lives; but this——" she pointed to the mound at her feet. They both looked down upon it—then lapsed into a thoughtful silence.

The last rites of a belated funeral being conducted not far from them were drawing to their close. The minister's voice, in the hush that followed the work of the spades, rose clear and distinct:

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

A short prayer followed. The carriages were soon filled with the mourners; the grinding sound of wheels, as they moved away came fainter and fainter, till at last it was gone.

The dusk was rapidly closing about them. Morrison arose to leave. "Shall I walk with you to your carriage?" he asked.

"No, no, I often stay this late. This is one of the proofs of my insanity—these frequent visits to this grave and the lateness of my leaving."

"They do not understand," he answered, "but I do; I understand your insanity!"

He was loath to leave her in the gathering twilight, and so sauntered slowly toward the entrance, thinking she might overtake him.

The distant monuments had been blotted out, and the nearer ones were taking on grotesque shapes as he wound among them. Already had the heavens begun their night-time work—to "declare the glory of God"; the great expansive field above, strewn with its little seeds of light, was fast ripening into a harvest of stars, and far on its outer verge the new moon lay like a thin, bright sickle.

The silence was only broken by his own footsteps, the fluttering wings of a homing bird, or the frightened leap of some little denizen of this seclusion, whose home he had neared.

"It seems very peaceful here," he said; "this quiet sleep at the end of a wearing journey is surely good. But I am glad that *she* has not yet lain down in this bed—that this slumber has not yet pressed down her eyelids. This great grief has been spared me. That has not come to me, and I shall not anticipate it. It may never come; I may be called hence first. I hope I shall. I cannot think of her *dead.*"

In a little while he had reached the entrance, where he boarded a waiting car, and was soon leaving behind the cemetery, with its peaceful silence, and speeding on to the city of the living, the noise of whose traffic shortly came to his ears like the sound of waves, subdued, not hushed, by the night and darkness. The crim-

son glow of its furnaces lit up the eastern sky, and frequent intermittent flashes, told of the myriads of human beings hurrying to and fro beneath the sparkling wires of the trolley.

"How sharp the contrast between these cities," he thought, as they hastened on, "not many spans apart, and yet between, the unfathomable abyss!"

With these and kindred musings the miles were left behind, the perspective shortened, the houses crowded together, the noises grew in volume, and he was presently once more a part of the turmoil—an atom in the great, restless ocean.

The car sped past the street on which he should have stopped. Had he forgotten? His hand was on the bell, but he withdrew it without ringing. "I will walk past the house," he said, "the house in which she lives, in which she wakes, and sleeps, and dreams. Maybe in the long reveries that come to her waking or

sleeping there are some thoughts of me—maybe some *kindly* thoughts." Mrs. Kantrell's words had found lodgment in his brain, and more than once he repeated them reassuringly to himself, "while those we love still live, there is hope."

He stopped in front of her home. No one was passing—why not gaze to satiety, if only on the walls that held her?

The hall and lower rooms were brilliantly lighted, especially the library, where every bulb was contributing its incandescence to what seemed to Morrison an illumination. A passer-by might have thought a *fête* in progress, only it was known that the mistress of this house never gave *fêtes*. The blinds had not been lowered, and between the curtains, draped to the sides, he could outline some of the familiar objects within. There, on the farther wall, hung a picture that had been given her for a bridal present, The Huguenots: those

sad young lovers, in whose breasts so fiercely struggled strong human love, with stronger principle; the frail, sweet girl and the manly youth beside her, her face of passing beauty turned pleadingly to his, urging him to wear the badge that meant life; his face calm, loving, but unyielding in its resolve. Morrison recalled vividly the day the picture was first hung in its place—the place it now occupied—how he and Gertrude had together stood looking at it. "*Those* were days that tried men's souls," she had said, "but they are past, and now it is easy to be true, and to do right." Her arms were clasped about his neck and he was looking down into her face, as full of joy and happiness as was the pictured girl's of grief and pain.

There, too, was the piano, around which were clustered many happy memories. Gertrude made no pretensions to excellence in music. "I play for my own and my husband's

pleasure," she was wont to say, "and for the *amusement* of my friends." But she sang ballads sweetly, in a tender, sympathetic voice with no aspirations to high notes or scientific trills—a mellow, soft contralto, in which the words were rendered as distinctly as the notes. His memory was clear and true to him to-night; he could see her singing, and hear the words. Sadder they seemed than ever to him now:

"I miss the soft clasp of your hand and your breath warm on my cheek,
And I still keep listening for the words you never more will speak."

While he stood thus, his eyes riveted on the familiar interior, living again with delirious joy those other days, the sliding doors opposite him parted, and Gertrude entered the room. He started involuntarily and came a step nearer. Gertrude, his Gertrude—his wife! How beautiful she looked, and not a day older

than when they had first come here to live, a young husband and wife. This was a largeness of reward he had not expected when he turned into the street only to pass and look at the *house* which held her—he had not thought to see *her, herself!*

But now she stood before him in all her loveliness, and his hungry eyes feasted themselves as a famished man eats food. With feverish haste he took in all the details. He noted how carefully she was gowned, how beautifully her hair was dressed; he even saw she wore no rings, and that her jewels were the gift of her aunt—not his.

But someone followed her into the room, in fact two, but he had no eyes for the other, the woman; it was only the man he saw, who, sauntering up to a sofa and seating himself, began opening a paper to read, with a homelike air; just in the way he would have done himself—just in the way he *had* often done himself.

Gertrude approached the window to lower the blind, but before it was done the man turned, and he saw his face. He started back, as from a blow—it was Granville Collins.

He clutched the rail against which he was leaning. The hot blood surged through his veins—a wild cry came to his lips, but died before it was uttered. What right had he to say—to think—to do anything!

He did not move, but looked on, half dazed, at the bright but opaque panel behind which he knew that *she* was talking with the man who was to take his place in her life! Some people passed him on the walk; he heard their half-subdued comments; they seemed to know him, for he heard his name. But he did not care.

"Ah, Curtman," he said to himself, "this is the work of your own hands and you must look on it the rest of your life—a cup of your own mixing and you must drink it, little by little, until it is gone!"

He turned toward his hotel, but walked slowly and uncertainly, like one not sure he was in the road he wished to follow. Once he stopped and turned as if to retrace his steps. A stony look came into his eyes, and his countenance darkened like that of one who contemplates an evil deed—only a moment, the next he had resumed his walk with a resolute step.

Many a time, in after years, he looked back upon this moment, thankful that he had been saved from making still more miserable his life, and blackening his soul with a crime.

When he reached the glare of the corner drug store, someone accosted him. It was Jerry.

"Is this you, Boss?" he said; "looks nachel like to see you 'roun' in this part er town."

"Yes—where are you going, Jerry?"

"'Roun' to Miss Gertrue's. They's got

comp'ny tharr ter-nite, an' you kno' whut that means."

Jerry patted significantly that part of his anatomy not far removed from his heart—it is said to be not far removed from any man's heart—called the stomach. "No hotel supper fer Jerre ter-nite! But, Boss," he added after looking more closely at Morrison, "ain't you sick? You suttenly looks like you wuz. Jest that white an' ashey! My! my! Lemme go in here," nodding toward the drug store, "an' git you sumthin' ter take, some quinide er bronide er sumthin' nuther."

Curtman looked as colorless as Jerry said, but he was not ill, not ill in body, but distraught—so distraught that he thought of sending a message to Gertrude, demanding an interview!

Of course, the next instant he dismissed it as unworthy consideration, but he would have Jerry buy him some medicine; he might not

take it to be sure, but Gertrude would hear of it, perchance, and think that he was ill. And she would then give him sympathy; she would give that to the veriest stranger that crossed her path, and he had been her—*husband.* Surely her nature had not been altogether changed—her *new happiness* had not turned her heart to adamant. Yes, he knew she would pity him, and her pity was more to him than the praise, could he have it, of the whole world. These, and many like rambling thoughts, passed through his mind as he stood listening to Jerry.

"Here, Jerry," he said, at length, handing him some money, "you may get me something, quinine or anything."

In a little while Jerry was back. "Here it is, Boss," he said. "I dunno whut it iz, but the drug man sez it's fine. I 'spec' 'twill do you a sight uv good. I'd take it ef I wuz you. I'd go straight home an' take it. Heyr's yer

change; you sent fore five times es much as it cost."

"You can keep the change," said Morrison, and taking the package resumed his trudge.

"The Boss suttenly do kno' how to give tips," remarked Jerry, as he counted over the good-sized coins of which he found himself possessed. "Ef all the gen'lmen I waits on kno'd es much 'bout tippin es he does, I could putty soon go out of the hotel bizness an' be a barber."

Along this line Jerry thought quite seriously, as he journeyed on toward the good dinner he had promised himself, weighing the advantages against the disadvantages of a change of occupation. The arguments in its favor, whatever they were, were nullified by the acceptance of the old-time saying, that just here came to his mind, "Let well enough alone."

"What would you look like, nigger," he

soliloquized, "ef some day when you wuz a-shavin' some man, you wuz ter let the razer slip an' cut his throte, an' then git hung fer it! How'd yer like ter wake up some mornin' an' fine yerself hung out on a gallus to arr? You'se gittin' 'long well nuff es it iz an' whut you wan' do eny differ'nt fer? You needn't try to lay up no money—it ain't the rich folks that's hap'yust; look at Miss'er Cu'tmun. Ef you wuz to die, let Didamy wuk fer herseff er git some other nigger to wuk fer her. No, Jerre, you ain't got nuthin' to bother 'bout."

The next minute this care-free sentiment was expressed in the song that rang out as he hurried on to the good dinner:

> "Hat on my hed' an' shoes on my feet
> What mo' need I care?"

CHAPTER XIV

"There is hope that is never put by,
There is love that refuses to die."

A FEW evenings later Morrison received in his room a call from Granville. He would not have responded to the knock, had he known who craved admission.

He considered the call effrontery, but got along with his visitor wonderfully well under the circumstances. They talked of the market, politics, and events of public interest—things as far removed from what was in their hearts as they could possibly find, only now and then making any mention whatever of things personal.

Morrison had congratulated himself more than once that the visit was drawing to a close without anything disagreeable having oc-

curred. He hated scenes and had resolved there should be none, but he would be glad when this man's interview was ended.

There need never be another—a street acquaintance should be quite enough for them. All this he thought as he sat talking with studied, or rather stilted politeness to his visitor.

After a pause, somewhat longer than the many that had marked this interview, Granville said:

"I have been wanting to talk with you for some time past, Morrison, ever since I last came from New York, but somehow—I could never get an opportunity. And then, too—I felt you were trying to avoid me——"

"Well?" Curtman replied, with the expression of face and voice of one prepared to hear something disagreeable.

"I am going to be married."

"That is something that generally calls

forth the congratulations of friends," replied Morrison dryly.

"It most assuredly ought. You know that yourself, Morrison. That is—I mean——" he added in embarrassment, suddenly recalling that Morrison had had trouble in his wedded life.

"You saw my bachelor apartments?"

Morrison retained only a general impression of them; the only time he had ever been in them he was in no condition to receive, (much less retain), accurate impressions.

"Forgotten? Well, they are among the handsomest in the city. I selected and furnished them with reference to living out a bachelor's life and made them as home-like as I could. Somehow I hadn't cared to marry since I was young—that is, since I first went into society, for I refuse to call a man five and thirty old. I got a back-set then, in my first love affair."

Here Morrison felt resentful at the knowing look he gave him. What business had he to refer to those days when they were both lovers of Gertrude! But he had himself well in hand and gave no expression to his anger—this man should not so much as see, much less triumph over his humiliation.

"I say I tried to make my apartments a home," Granville continued, "but that is something tables, and rugs, and bric-a-brac can't do, even when supplemented with good service, as are mine. It takes a wife to round out things into a home. God knew at 'the beginning of the creation' that it was 'not good that the man should be alone'; and I think it is not much better, if any, for some of us to be alone now than it was for Adam then.

"I'm tired, heartily tired, of suppers, and clubs, and such like, living on the outside—of being nothing to anybody, and knowing it.

Now a man can be fooled on this point for a long time. He can be duped into *thinking* he is something to somebody, but he comes at length to find out his mistake. The discovery may hurt him, but it will help him. He will learn to rightly estimate some things he has been underrating. Put out a flambeau and you will see the stars."

Morrison agreed this time readily and heartily with what he said.

"And so I am going to marry. And I must own that I thought it was on account of the—relationship—that you were trying to avoid me. I thought you might have—heard about it, and naturally felt constrained."

Morrison felt that his *face* was hot, but saw to it that his *voice* was cool.

"I have heard nothing about it whatever," he replied, calmly. "Whom do you marry? Excuse me, though," he added on noticing, he thought, a look of reluctance on Granville's

face, "I withdraw my question; I don't insist on your confidence."

"Oh, I don't hesitate to tell you; it is what I came here for. It is Alice Farrell. You know she is—Gertrude's niece."

"Alice Farrell—can it be possible! Give me your hand, old comrade; here is mine with sincere congratulations—hearty congratulations."

"She looks much like Gertrude——"

"Oh! very much—that is, I have no doubt she does. I've not seen her since she was a child. And it is Alice you are about to marry. Alice and not—oh, yes, I understand, I understand; you thought I might resent your marrying—Gertrude's niece."

"Yes, that is just what I thought," and Granville threw back his head and laughed heartily. "What queer pranks one's imagination can play. Here I have been thinking you quite cool and 'offish' with me, and, lo! I find

you willing for the marriage, ready to give the bride away, if she belonged to you!"

Morrison laughed—but not for the same reason—and talked on, delirious with happiness.

"Here, I must drink your health, my friend. I have a bottle of the best wine made—fifty years old——" He went to the cabinet and opened the door, "but what am I thinking about, I sent that wine by Beverley to his wife —I'll have to pledge you in water; and after all what is better than water for one's thirst! Here's to you," and handing him a glass lifted another to his own lips, "may your love be as pure and good as this. Let nothing come between you, Granville," he added earnestly, laying his hand on Granville's shoulder and looking straight into his eyes. "You understand.

"Don't go, Granville," Morrison insisted, as the former arose and moved toward the

door—" don't go yet; we must take a smoke together; the 'pipe of peace,' as you thought I was at war with you." And again he laughed.

"No, it's too late now," said Granville, consulting his watch; "it is nearly twelve."

"Is it possible? I had no idea it was that late. Take these cigars with you, then, if you must go. I brought them with me from Havana—the very best on the market. Oh! don't be niggardly with yourself; take more—all of them," and he thrust the box into his hand.

"What a fine man Collins is," Curtman exclaimed as soon as the former was out of the door. "A fine man. He has been elected President of the Blanker Banking Co., which means that his rating is first-class in the business world. I'm not surprised, not at all surprised. He has lived fast, but that day is gone, long ago; a noble fellow and will make Alice a capital husband! And," he kept on, pausing in the hasty strides he was making

back and forth through the room, "it is not Gertrude he marries—oh, it is not Gertrude! God is good!"

The relief that Granville's announcement brought to Morrison's mind is difficult of conception; he, himself, could not have put it into words had he tried. His sleep that night was sweet and sound, such sleep as he had not known for months. He met Granville the following day on the street, or rather overtook him; for seeing him a square ahead, he quickened his speed that he might walk with him and hear from him again that it was *Alice Farrell* whom he was to marry.

"Good-morning, Granville," he called while hardly yet abreast; "you get over the ground at such a rapid rate these days that common mortals, heavier of foot, can hardly get in hailing distance."

"Good-morning; I was not aware of my rapid gait."

"Rapid!—you travel as if shod with wings! I thought I would overtake you and renew my congratulations; and then, too, I must own up to curiosity. How did it come about, Granville? where did you meet Alice?"

"At Atlantic City; but it's a long story, too long to tell you now. But I will tell you some time, and soon."

"Oh! I know you can't tell me now; in fact, I won't force your confidence, old boy, but I wanted to be sure the cloud between us was lifted, and to hear from your own lips and in the *daytime* at that, that you were to marry Alice Farrell. I was wondering if I could have dreamed it."

"No dream, Curtman—it is a fact and one of the best facts that ever came my way. Here's my hand for the continuance of the old friendship, and I'll say at the same time, farewell, as we'll not likely meet again to-day, as I leave to-night for New York. When next

you see me in Chicago you will see *Mrs.* Collins with me."

And so they parted, little knowing what changes would come between this farewell and their next meeting. How good that "what lies before us, pleasure or pain," is not ours to know. How hard it would be to bear to-day's sorrow, knowing a greater one awaited us on the morrow, or to keep at monotonous work-a-day duties with a cup of bliss nearing, almost in reach of, our outstretched hand!

"Happy man to get such a wife as Alice—if she is indeed like Gertrude; and happy woman to get such a man as Collins for a husband. He has not his equal in this or any town!"

So mused Morrison as he walked along toward his business house. "I shall give them a bridal present; it shall be a present worthy my friend and—*Gertrude's* niece. I believe I'll give them Blueblood. I paid eight hun-

dred for him in Kentucky and have refused a thousand for him here. I never use him now. So high a perch as the driver's is unbecoming me. I keep to where I belong—close to the ground. Alice is marrying well—well. It's an easy task for her to love Collins—an easy task—I *love him myself.*"

CHAPTER XV

"In all this world, as thinketh me,
Is none so pleasant to my e'e."

GRANVILLE, on finding that Morrison took so kindly the announcement of his engagement to Alice Farrell, thought of telling him the particulars of their meeting and some of the summer's romance, but forbore. The hour was late, and besides, interwoven with the story, was a name he thought it best to leave uncalled, a name they had never yet mentioned to each other. And so he left what he had thought to tell untold.

One morning, in the early part of the summer past, as Granville sat breakfasting at one of the hotels in Atlantic City, he noticed, not far from him at one of the tables, a young woman, menu card in hand, giving an order to the waiter at her side.

"That is Gertrude," he said to himself, a broad smile covering his face, and was about to arise from his scarcely finished meal to go speak to her when he perceived his mistake.

Moreover, at this juncture, Gertrude herself came into the room, and, proceeding to the aforementioned young woman, seated herself by her, and forthwith they began conversing in the familiar, friendly way of sisters, mother and daughter, or relatives of some near degree.

"This is strange," he said to himself, "but," after a few moments' reflection added, "I have already solved it; this dual is Gertrude's niece. This is her sister's daughter; but far more like her aunt than like her mother."

Here Granville grew reminiscent and painted for himself many pictures of the days when he was a frequent visitor at the Bramlet home, in those days when Gertrude was grow-

ing up to womanhood and this married sister, Mrs. Farrell, was coming back on visits.

It was hard for him to realize the lapse of time and that here, before him, was Mrs. Farrell's daughter, then a child, now a grown woman. "And how much like Gertrude at her age," he kept reiterating to himself, seizing every opportunity, when she was unobservant, to scan the features, that had for him such a pleasingly familiar look.

"Alas for the men she meets, if she is altogether like her aunt," he sighed.

He could not wait to see them in the parlor or hall, he would not run the risk of losing his old friend; so hastily folding his unread paper, walked over to speak with her while they were waiting to be served.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Gertrude," he said, extending his hand.

"And a mutual one," she answered, giving him hers in return, accompanying it with her

sweet urbanity—a rare combination of dignity and cordiality. Why is it that it *is* rare—why *should* it be rare?

"I was so afraid you were a bird of passage and had only stopped here to take on a supply of bird seed, so to speak, that I hurried over to speak to you before you had accomplished your purpose and flown. Now we men couldn't be civil before 'feeding,' you know—it would never have occurred to me to go up and talk with a man before he had breakfasted, but you women are always docile——"

"Mr. Collins, this is my niece, Miss Farrell."

From the pretty way in which Miss Farrell acknowledged the introduction, *her* happy combination of dignity and cordiality, Granville saw at once that she resembled her aunt in more ways than one.

"Do you know, Gertrude," Granville continued, "that I was taken off my feet with

surprise when I looked over here and saw your niece. I thought her you, yourself!"

"The resemblance must indeed be striking; we are often told we are alike."

"I am frequently so flattered," Alice smilingly remarked.

"Well put, Miss Farrell," replied Granville—"it's a piece of delicate flattery you can exchange with each other. I'm not going to say to which belongs the larger share of the compliment—I have no intention of starting an internecine war. But tell me about yourselves; let me know what to expect? Are you *en passant,* or permanent guests, here for a day, week, or month? Are you will-o'-the-wisps, or what?"

"We expect to be here several weeks," Gertrude answered, "long enough for you to get heartily tired of us, if you are yourself a fixture. Are you, or what are you?"

"Well, I've changed my mind since I came

into the room; I had thought to stay a fortnight; I now expect to stay as long as you two are here. I'm spending my vacation somewhere, why not here?"

Gertrude and Alice both expressed pleasure on hearing this. "For though," as Gertrude went on to explain, "we are both old enough to travel about where we please unchallenged, yet——"

"It is always a dangerous experiment for pretty women."

"Now, Mr. Collins," laughed Alice, "I much suspect you belong in the category with Stanley."

"The explorer? I protest, I'm innocent of the charge. I'm neither explorer nor discoverer. I never discovered anything in my life."

"But wait; I'll prove that you are," she replied, "I've heard that Stanley said he never saw an ugly woman. Now, we would have

thought in the heart of the lands he had explored, he had seen some uncouth females that we would have pronounced ugly. He seems to have discovered beauty in the face of every woman, or at least said he did, if he be correctly quoted."

He shook his head. "I don't say that about every woman; but I'm not going to pay you another compliment. You women are voracious of sweets, and I know, too, how to make good sweets; but I'm not going to give you another morsel—at present."

"You interrupted me," resumed Mrs. Curtman, "you keep on interrupting me—I was about saying, that although we can, and do, travel alone, it is certainly more agreeable to run across acquaintances, and a positive pleasure to meet a friend one has known the greater part of one's life."

"It is undoubtedly the case with me. I'm certainly glad of this meeting and herewith put

myself at the disposal of your ladyships, beseeching you to make use of me in any way that 'pleasures your dainty whim.'"

"Take care! You may repent of this," replied Alice, looking up into his face with an arch smile that set some old tunes to ringing in his heart.

"But I must leave you now," he said; "I see your breakfast coming, and I can't endure the disillusion that may come with it. I can't stand seeing you descend to my plane to nag the waiter because the steak is tough and the coffee weak. Nor can I put up with your taking more interest in the muffins than in me. Never!"

"Why, Aunt Gertrude," said Alice, as she watched him move off, "what a handsome and agreeable man is Mr. Collins. I wonder that you did not impress me more in speaking of him—I've often heard you mention him, but somehow I did not gather from your remarks

the favorable impression that he makes himself."

"Well, I don't know how it happened. I can't tell, unless when we were all young together, his friend who came often with him to see me was so far his superior, or so seemed to me, that I maybe undervalued him. . . . We can't always explain ourselves, Alice—in fact, we cannot always understand ourselves."

Mr. Collins was as good as his promise, and did all in his power to contribute to their pleasure—indeed, taxed his ingenuity in contriving ways to be with them in some capacity or other as much as he desired without boring them. Dr. and Mrs. Bernley were, after a fashion, companions of Gertrude's; that is, Mrs. Bernley was one of her girlhood friends with whom she had always kept in touch through correspondence, even after the latter's marriage and removal to Philadelphia.

"I am gladder than I can tell you, Ger-

trude," she said the first night of her arrival, as they met in the parlor, "that I find you here. You are, of all my friends, the one I would have chosen to meet. I know of no one in the whole world, who could so well help me with my scheme as you."

"That depends," laughed Gertrude.

"Your willingness doesn't depend, if you are the Gertrude I used to know. I suspect, too, I can count on you as of yore."

"What is your scheme?" asked Gertrude. "I'm curious to know."

"It is this," she explained. "Dr. Bernley is broken down, almost in nervous prostration, from close and long-continued attention to his practice; he needs this salt air and rest. He knows it himself, admits it, but says he has not time for the treatment; and, moreover, that the idleness will bore him more than the prescription benefit. I have persuaded him to come here for a four weeks' stay, and I want

you to help me keep him here. This is indeed odd," she laughed out merrily, "for a woman to ask another woman to help her carry a point with her husband! but I do this very thing, Gertrude. You were born magnetic; you must know it yourself. Now use your magnetism to help your friend."

"What must I do? What is my rôle?"

"Just be your dear, agreeable self to Dr. Bernley, and help me interest him in everything from the merry-go-rounds on up. You *must* help me keep him here by the sea."

Gertrude was easily committed. With her, the sense of serving gave added zest to pleasure.

But the task she undertook was not the easiest she had essayed. This she discovered soon after meeting Dr. Bernley. He was gentlemanly in manner and scholarly in attainments, but slow in conversation, lacking the small change of words, that pass in social

currency along with the heavier coins of thought.

The sickness and suffering with which he was so closely brought in contact might have accentuated a nature of a serious trend, but for all he looked so glum, he was at heart an optimist, confessed the worth of sunshine and cheerfulness, prescribed them for his patients and declared his willingness to take them, too, if he had time.

As for Mrs. Bernley's scheme, it worked successfully, and she soon saw her husband safely on the list of those who liked or rather loved Gertrude.

"She has such a knack of bringing out the commendable in a fellow, of showing him off at his best paces," he said; "she listens so attentively while a man airs his views, and if she disagrees does it so tactfully, and gently, that he finds it easy to change sides and agree with her. Moreover," he added, "the more he talks

of her, the more he comes to know her views are generally the better views and well worth adopting!"

Mr. Collins gladly included Dr. and Mrs. Bernley in his excursions, rowing, yachting, or whatever they might be; in fact, he rather liked having these added guests, for it was fast coming to the pass that he was pleased to have it wholly left to him to entertain Alice, and he was beginning, moreover, to see that Alice was an improvement on Gertrude!

Gertrude saw this and was heartily glad; she was not the woman to rejoice in holding for aye the love that she could not reciprocate. She did not care for a string of hearts, over which to gloat as an Indian over his victims' scalps. It was all at last being properly adjusted, and Granville's sentiment for her, becoming what hers had always been for him, a strong, sweet friendship, nothing more.

"The love of the only man whose love was

mine by right I could not hold," she said to herself. "I will accept that of no other, nor stand between anyone and happiness. I do not expect, I do not desire, that anyone shall share with me my burden. I have been given strength to bear it; it is at home on no other shoulders. 'My grief is my own—but my heart is full of peace.'"

Gertrude was not surprised, nor did she affect surprise, when Alice told her, to what plane the affair between her and Granville had climbed. She had watched the ascent, with an interest of which they were not aware.

"Do you know, Aunt Gertrude," she began in the round-about way in which a woman knows how to divulge something she has been hiding as a secret, "that I don't look upon Mr. Collins as upon the other men who have loved me—or said they did? I either said 'No' out and out to the others, or made some evasive reply till I could get rid of them, but——"

"You find it more difficult to get rid of him?"

"Get rid of him! Why, I don't intend to get rid of him. . . . You don't understand, Aunt Gertrude, . . . I care for him——"

"Oh, yes, I do understand, my dear; and if he loves you I'm glad that you 'care' for him as you say. I hope that *care* with you is only another name for love."

"It is," she said in a lowered voice. Gertrude noted, but said nothing, of the heightened color that accompanied this confession.

There was a little silence, during which neither looked directly at the other. In a little while Alice continued:

"I believe he thinks more of me than any suitor has ever thought of me. Maybe, though," and she laughed the conscious laugh of the woman who knows she is loved, "it is because I want it to be so. He seems so happy. . . . I wish you could hear him talk!

He loved some woman long ago, when he was young, he says, and had somehow come to think he would never love another, although she married, and passed forever out of his life."

"Did he give her—name?"

"No, and I didn't ask it. I don't care to know—why should I?"

"You are wise, my dear; what possible good would it do you to know the name of someone he loved away back in his past, long before he knew you."

"I *don't* care; I have his present love; let his past love go."

"Yes, it is only the love a man gives in marriage that is a woman's 'to have and to hold.'"

"It was likely a shallow, youthful fancy," Alice kept on, "I dare say the girl was some simple little purring creature, of whom he would be ashamed now. I suspect he heartily

congratulates himself that he is not tied to her. *I'm* certainly glad that he is not."

She threw back her head and laughed heartily. Gertrude's face was averted—she kept it averted. What explanation could she have given Alice for the merriment that overspread it?

"Well, I heartily congratulate you," said Gertrude, at length, and putting her arm around her kissed the happy face turned toward hers.

CHAPTER XVI

"Better a thousand times, to bear
A blow in the place of an earned caress,
Than to turn aside into selfish ways
Or to pity less.

"Better the long abiding pain
Of a wrongèd love, in its sufferance meek,
Than the hardened heart and the bitter tongue
And the sullen cheek."

COLLINS, as well as Gertrude and Alice, was among the guests of an excursion party given by Dr. and Mrs. Bernley. The ocean was calm, the breezes balmy, and the day proved a pleasant one to all aboard the yacht on which they were being entertained. On the homeward sail they met with some belating hindrance, so that night came down upon them, before they reached the pier from which they had, that morning, launched. But no one

aboard regretted the delay. What could they find at the end of their route more delightful or beautiful than what they then enjoyed?—the cool night air; the dimly outlined coast, with hamlets picked out in points of light; the lapping music of the waves about the vessel's sides; and the full moon, not yet far above the horizon, flooding the air with radiance, and making a path of silver across the water.

To some of the party this beauty was an exhilarant, and the exuberance of their feelings ran over in song; to others it was silencing. Among these was Gertrude, who sat listening to the music of the waves, and living over a day of her honeymoon, which she and her young husband had spent upon these waters, maybe on this very boat.

Granville and Alice sat apart, too much interested in each other to effect an interest in the other guests.

"Do you know, Alice," he said at length at

the end of one of those sweet silences in which lovers *talk* to each other—(the wireless telegraphy they have used many a day—long before Marconi startled the world with his discovery)—"do you know that I feel like Gertrude suspects our love affair?"

Alice laughed her inimitable laugh. "What a suspicious man you are, to be sure! or are all men suspicious? What makes you think so?"

"Well, for one thing, she leaves us to ourselves, as if she feared being *de trop*."

"As for that, Aunt Gertrude likes to be to herself; she enjoys sitting and dreaming. But to be honest with you, she does know. I told her. You don't care, do you? She was pleased."

"Care! Not I. I'm glad of it, but—I'm a little curious to know *how* you told her. Did she ask you? Or did you go running into her room one day crying out: 'It's just as I expected—another simpleton has proposed'!"

"You know that never occurred," Alice replied, and lowering her voice, she said: "I told her how glad you said you were to find you could love again—that away back in your young days, you had loved a woman so much, that never until now, had you cared for another."

"Did you tell her that?"

"Yes; you don't mind my having told her that, do you?"

Granville made no reply. "Did she want to know—her name?" he asked.

"Yes, but I told her that I didn't know—that I didn't want to know, and I don't. What do I care whom you loved then, dear sweetheart mine, so you love me *now!*"

Granville drew his chair close to hers; he would have fain said aloud the many things that came into his heart, but the little coterie were not many steps off, and among a dozen people one acute of hearing and keen of vision

could be safely counted on, so contented himself with imprisoning her hand in his, and saying in *sotto voce* some things very acceptable to the ears for whom intended, but not necessary to repeat to others.

"Yes," continued Alice, "I told her, that you said this way-off rival of mine was the fancy of your callow youth——"

"Oh, no, Alice, you didn't say that!"

"That she was a simple little dough-faced nobody——"

"Surely, Alice—surely you didn't tell—her—that I said *that!*"

"Why, would you care so much if I did? But I know; you are like the knights of old and 'warriors bold' that they sing about; you would not have yourself represented as talking in that style of any fair lady, would you? You are not of that variety of *genus homo* of these days that represent themselves as pursued."

"Well, I must confess I'm not a 'warrior bold,' though I can say of my lady love as one of them sang of his, 'that none with her compare.' But, seriously, there is a great deal, Alice, in the way one has been reared, and I do believe if my father had heard me express myself discourteously concerning a lady he would have locked me up in the attic till I had learned better manners or—sense."

"A fine father that," interrupted Alice, "and a fine son he reared! No," she continued, "I'll relieve your mind. I did not tell Aunt Gertrude that you said anything that you did not say. I didn't put any silly words on your lips."

"I'm glad, indeed, for I have better use for my lips."

He looked over his shoulder—the coterie were still close, and the lynx-eyed friend might still be on guard, so only lifted her finger tips to the aforementioned lips.

For all Gertrude had so much, and varied uses for her time, in rounding out the pleasures of others, there was much of it left for her to spend alone, while the friends were with one another in their family circles, or otherwise engaged. Much of this solitude she passed on the beach, sitting apart, or lost in the throng, enjoying the great world of waters before her, and drinking in its sweet but solemn music. Away in the distance, at the farthest reach of vision, the sky bent down and bound it in with a rim of mist, but over and over, close upon one another, from out that misty border the foam-crested waves came journeying shoreward, at first bare undulations, but, gathering strength and volume, came rushing in like white-crested squadrons hastening to their own destruction. Again, the broad expanse before her was a calm, its farthest reach a field of deepest blue, with, nearer, in vivid contrast, broad bands of green.

But in storm or calm, no matter which, it was always grand. With eyes fastened on this changing glory, and ears attuned to its song, she often found herself repeating in unison with its cadence: "The sea is his, and he made it."

"How small," she mused, "in the presence of all this vastness and grandeur, seem the malice, hate, and feuds of life; how like guilty things they creep away and hide! How into insignificance fade our poor ambitions, whose only aim is our little selves, and sharp in contrast, come out those things that know no death or change—the immortalities."

To-day the surf was high and the bathers a multitude, reaching far up and down the coast, in some places many, in others few, making as it were a broken cordon of human beings along the water's edge.

They could but be of interest to Gertrude, who watched them with pleasure, but a pleas-

ure mixed with solicitude, so like cockle shells they seemed, and the waters so strong.

The stout of limb buffeted the waves and rode in, victorious, on their crests, the frail and weak, keeping close to shore, were thrown like shells and seaweed on the sand. There were hallos, sounds of merriment, laughter of children, and snatches of song, but through and above it all the ocean's ceaseless roar.

Not far from Gertrude was a party of special interest, several in number, both men and women, and all good swimmers. To watch these was an unmixed pleasure, so sure she felt of their safety—that like a lot of petrels they would emerge unharmed from any situation however perilous.

What, then, was her surprise to hear a cry for help arise from their midst; to see commotion among them, and near-by swimmers from other parties hurrying to the rescue. What had happened she could not tell, but

heard the cries, saw a brief struggle, and then two men—each with one arm fighting the waves, and in the other bearing something between them—coming shoreward, and then laying on the sands not far from her the limp form of a woman. She thought but a moment —the next she was at her side. The eyes were closed, the face still and white, save where the blood was flowing from a ragged cut in the cheek. But it needed one glance only for Gertrude—through the pallor, and blood, and clinging hair she recognized the face of Helen Landray.

The women of the party seemed dazed, and cried to one another in accents of horror, "Helen Landray is dead!"

"No, not dead," said Gertrude, and sitting down on the sand she took her head in her lap, and folding her handkerchief closely together, pressed it, with all her might to the bleeding wound.

"Call that doctor—there, where that child is standing." She indicated with her disengaged hand. "Call him by name—Dr. Bernley; that is Dr. Bernley," and taking from about her throat a little scarf, waved it in the air, as best she could, as a signal.

Dr. Bernley saw the fluttering scarf—even recognized Gertrude, and in a few seconds was at her side, leaning over the helpless woman.

"This is good work you have done, Mrs. Curtman, the immediate staunching of this wound; but hold on bravely a little while longer till I improvise some bandages;" and taking his own handkerchief and tearing it into strips knotted them together. Other handkerchiefs were handed him, and in a little while the wound was more securely staunched.

"She is not dead, but stunned and unconscious," added Dr. Bernley, after a hasty examination; "but I cannot tell the extent of her injuries, even locate them, just now. They

may not necessarily be serious. How did it happen?" For up to this time he could think of nothing other than a wound from a knife.

Encouraged by the assurance that she was neither dead nor dying, her companions were calmed sufficiently to give what explanation they could of the disaster. It seems a floating log, borne inward by an approaching wave unobserved by her, in fact, by them all, until too late to warn her, struck with its jagged edge her face.

In a few moments the ambulance arrived; her friends lifted her into it, and accompanied by Dr. Bernley and the nurse, she was driven to the hospital.

When Gertrude reached her hotel she found not only Granville and Alice, but Mrs. Bernley, too, awaiting her.

"We were getting uneasy, Aunt Gertrude," said Alice; "we were beginning to think the sea serpent had swallowed you."

"Or that you and the doctor had gone off yachting and left us," said Mrs. Bernley. "But you are looking pale, Gertrude," she suddenly exclaimed. "And here are some spots of blood on your sleeve! Something has happened—tell us. Have you been hurt?"

Gertrude would gladly have kept to herself all the occurrences of the morning, but she knew that Dr. Bernley would naturally relate them. What reason had he not? What reason had he to suppose their rehearsal would be distressing to her? But she was determined not to give the name of the wounded woman, hoping that Dr. Bernley had not been able to obtain it. Anyway *she* would withhold it.

"Tell us about it, Gertrude," said Granville seriously; "something has happened; have you been hurt?"

"No, I have not been hurt," she answered, "but while I was sitting on the beach one of the swimmers, a woman, was struck by a float-

ing log and rendered unconscious. She was rescued by her friends and brought up on the sand. But her face was cut, and the wound was bleeding profusely. I was near and rendered some little service—Dr. Bernley and I," she added, turning toward Mrs. Bernley.

"Will she die?" asked Alice.

"I hope not; Dr. Bernley thinks her injuries are not necessarily serious."

"Dr. Bernley certainly knows," announced Mrs. Bernley with wifely loyalty and confidence. "What did he say—give us his diagnosis?"

"That the wound was disfiguring, but not dangerous."

"Who is she—did you learn her name, and where from?" asked Alice.

"From New York, I heard."

"And her name?"

The color rose to Gertrude's face, but she made no reply.

"I must go to my room, and make myself presentable for luncheon," she said, moving toward the hall.

Before she reappeared Dr. Bernley had joined the others and corroborated Mrs. Curtman's story. The wound in the woman's cheek would leave a scar, he thought, and she would be lame from other injuries he had discovered on the more thorough examination at the hospital. She had been restored to consciousness.

"But I think she will recover," he added, "though never to be the beautiful woman she must have been in the past."

Collins did not ask her name; he had rightly interpreted Gertrude's silence and heightened color. It was Gertrude's secret and he would respect it. He was not surprised, for he had but the day before seen Mrs. Landray and her party among the moving throng on the boardwalk.

But Mrs. Bernley had no knowledge of all this, and continued her investigation.

"Did you learn her name?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, a Mrs. Landray—a Mrs. Helen Landray of New York."

Alice was startled, but caught, before uttering it, the exclamation of surprise that came to her lips. She glanced furtively at Granville, but he was looking away and his face was impassive. "He did not hear," she said to herself. But her surmise was not correct—he had heard.

"Oh, the curiosity of you women!" laughed Dr. Bernley. "I charged my memory with this stranger's name, because I knew you would be dying to have it, and now, after I have brought and delivered it, of what use is the knowledge? Who of you know, or ever heard of, Mrs. Landray? Mrs. Helen Landray of New York?"

For several days following, Gertrude kept

to her room. She was not well, she said; and she was not. There was a feverish throbbing in her breast, a confusion of noises in her ears, and mingled with the ocean's roar a cry for help; again and again she saw the limp form of a woman borne along the sand; pallid and bleeding, and turned up to her, as she lay in her arms, the face of the woman who had come between her and her husband.

CHAPTER XVII

> "When many a day had come and fled,
> When grief grew calm."

"GOOD-EV'N', Brur Jerre; walk in. Wharr's Didamy?"

"Heyr she iz."

"Didn't see you at fust, Didamy; Brur Jerry fill up the dore so with his fat seff. Come in an' rest yer hats. You all ain't bin roun' heyr fer long time. Whut yer bin doin' with yerselves?"

"Oh, nuthin' in pertick'lar," answered Didama. "I ain't bin well. I wuz rite porely all las' week—had a tech of the rumatiz."

"Whut yer do fer it? Ever mix whynine an' lard an' rub with it? They say it's fust rate."

"No, I ain't tried that, but I of'n has rubbed with rem'dies. But I b'leve 'bout the bes' thing ter do is to keep a-goin' all the time."

"Didamy suttenly do b'leve in that," put in Jerry. "She's allers spinnin' street yarn. I wish it could be nit an' she'd stay at home an' nit me sum socks out it. I ain't got nuthin' but ris'bens roun' my feet ez 'tiz."

"Now, liss'n at Jerre; he kno' whut he say ain't so," objected Didamy. "I'se allers mendin' his close."

"Doan you worry, Didamy; I ain't payin' no 'tention to Brur Jerre. I doan b'leve my own lies when I tells 'em, an' I kno' I ain't gwine b'leve Brur Jerre's."

"I tell Jerre he gettin' moralized down tharr at the hotel. So many diff'nt kine uv people roun' him," apologized Didama. "You'll suttenly git moralized with whole lot uv diff'nt kine uv people roun' you, ef you

doan look out, passel sayin' one thing, an' nuther passel sayin' nuther."

"Tharr sho' iz different kine uv people roun' yer," said Jerry, "an' sum of 'em ain't got no manners 'tall. Yistiday Mr. Skerce sez to me, 'Jerre, you an' Miss'r Cu'tmun iz grate frens, ain't you?' I sez, 'Uv course we iz; I'se uv the same fam'bly with his wife.' 'His wife?' sez he, 'he ain't got no wife—he's a *devosay.*' 'I dunno whut a devosay iz,' I sez —'I dunno ez I ever seen one, but I kno's a thur'bred when I sees him, an' Miss'r Cu't-mun's a thur'bred.'

"Say, Lizerjane," he continued, "wharr's C'lumbus?"

"I dunno wharr C'lumbus is, Brur Jerre, but whut you wanter see C'lumbus fur? You an' him ez jest like cat an' dog, you ain't t'gether five minnits 'fore yer hard at it, makin' the fur fly!"

"That's a fac', an' I ain't askin' for C'lum-

bus kase I *wanter* see him—I'm askin' wharr he iz kase I *doan* wanter see him."

"Jest liss'n at that! Ain't Brur Jerre a caushion? askin' fer him kase he doan wanter see him!"

"Yes, I'm 'fraid he'll come in. How you all roun' here live with C'lumbus, anyhow? It makes me mad jest to look at him; he's sich an upstart."

"I don't have no trouble with C'lumbus," replied Eliza Jane. "When he gits enti'ly above hisself I jest give him a piece my mine. C'lumbus ain't a mean nigger, Brur Jerre; he jest hi-flutin' an' love ter hear hisseff talk."

"That whut I say 'bout C'lumbus," agreed Didama.

"Brur Jerre, did yer kno' we gwine ter have a weddin' in the fam'bly?" asked Eliza Jane, making a sudden change of topics.

"No; who gwine ter marry?"

"Miss'er Collins an' Miss Alice Farrell."

"Iz Miss'er Collins gwine ter marry Miss Alice? Well, well, I sho' am glad to hear that."

"Whut yer glad fer? Miss Alice is putty nuff to ketch more husbens than the law 'lows. She ain't behol'n ter Miss'er Collins or Miss'er Enybody-else to marry her; Miss Alice iz nearly es putty es Miss Gertrue. Talk like yer b'leeged to Miss'er Collins fer marryin' her! *I* ain't; an' it's the fust time I ever hear you go back on yer kin."

"You doan kno' whut I mean, Lizerjane. I ain't sayin' but Miss Alice couldn't marry enybody, but I didn't kno' that Miss'er Collins was a-settin' to her. Yo' sho'ly remem'er how he use ter cum courtin' Miss Gertrue when she wuz a young lady, doan you, an' how the Boss cut him out? Well, I jest 'lowed he'd cum back after Miss Gertrue an' they might be gwine ter marry."

"Miss Gertrue marry! What you talkin' 'bout, nigger. You sho'ly is los' yer mine."

"Well, ain't she got a devose?"

"Devose nuthin'. Devose doan mean marryin' agin, leastwise it doan with Miss Gertrue. Miss Gertrue wouldn't marry nairy man livin' 'ceptin' 'twuz the same one over agin. I'm 'shame uv you, Brur Jerre, an' I hope you'se shame uv yerseff!"

"Well," began Jerry apologetically, "I kno' lots uv folks duz marry agin, an' me an' the Boss got skerred 'bout it."

"You an' Miss'er Cu'tmun?"

"Oh, well, I doan mean he say enything 'bout it, but I jest keep a-drappin' a word here an' nother tharr—you kno' how we niggers can carry news when we wants ter. I thowt fer sutten, frum the way Miss'er Collins wuz comin' roun' here that tharr wuz a weddin' hachin', but I never onct thowt 'bout Miss Alice. I couldn't get use ter thinkin' that chile

wuz grow'd up yit. It seems like 'twuz jist yistiday she wuz runnin' 'roun' in short close. So, ez I say, I thowt it wuz Miss Gertrue he wuz after, an' I sez to myself, 'Jerre, you outter tell the Boss 'bout this, so he won't go all to pieces when it dose cum 'bout.' So I jest kep' sinuatin' and sinuatin'."

"An' Miss'er Cu'tmun b'leve you? He los' his mine, too?"

"I dunno 'bout that, fer he didn't say nuthin'; in fac' he never let on like he's lisnin' to whut I wuz sayin'. But he wuz. Yes, an' b'leve it, too, fer he look so mis'able all the nex' day, an' fer a whole passel er days after I tell him Miss'er Collins bin roun' heyr."

"Well, you kin jest carre yer black seff roun' tharr an' tell him better. Fust thing I ever kno' you to do like a nigger, Brur Jerre, to go mispresent Miss Gertrue."

"I b'leve you!" ejaculated Didama.

"Say, Lizerjane," and here Jerry drew his

chair nearer and lowered his voice, "did you ever tell Miss Gertrue whut I tole you 'bout that other 'oman."

"What other 'oman?"

"That night I wuz in the hall eavesdrappin'."

"Now, tharr 'tis, Brur Jerre, you ain't sat'fied mispresentin' Miss Gertrue; you gone mispresent yerseff, you wuzn't eavesdrappin', I tole you that onct befo'."

"No, whut I thinkin' 'bout? I mean that nite I staid in the hall while she wuz talkin' to the Boss, 'specially to hear whut she say."

"You bet I tole her! Didn't I tell you Lizerjane would git tharr? I jest said little sumthin' one day ter see how she take it, an' she didn't say nuthin', an' so the nex' day I out with it all."

"Did you tell her how raw he talk ter her, an' treat her like she wuz jest whut she wuz. Did you tell her all I sed?"

"I most suttenly did."

"Whut she say?"

"She never say nuthin'. I wuz wukin' 'way at sumthin' while I wuz talkin', an' I hadn't the face to look at her, but when I got to the dore an' turn roun' an' seen her, she look es white es a sheet. I feel sorry then I tole her."

Jerry looked away from the little group a few minutes.

"Oh, well," he said, turning again toward them and heaving a good, honest sigh, "it won't make much differ'nce one way or t'other long, fer the Boss is gwine ter die."

"Die! Miss'er Cu'tman gwine ter die! Whut you mean, Jerre?"

"I mean jest whut I say."

"How cum you never say nuthin' 'bout it to me, Jerre?" asked Didama in an injured tone of voice.

"Whut good would it 'a' done, Didamy; you ain't no doctor."

"I kno' I ain't, but I think a man orter tell his wife ev'rything, specially when he knows enybody's gwine ter die. I allus tells you when I kno' enybody es gwine ter die."

"I'm at the fust uv it myself," said Eliza Jane. "I never kno'd he wuz sick."

"He doan know it hisseff, leastwise he don't say so, an' tries to step 'long like he allus did; but he ain't the same man; sumthin' the matter with him—he's thin es a rail. Yes, he's gwine ter die, an' I mus' tell him so."

"Whut matter with you, nigger? You doan mean you gwine ter tell Miss'er Cu'tman he's gwine ter die!"

"Well, not in so many wuds, but I'll drap 'sinuations one day with nuther till he see whut I mean."

"Yes, but whut *you* think doan allus come to pass; you thowt Miss Gertrue wuz gwine ter

marry. You doan kno' no more'n some these we'ther men whut say it's gwine ter be warm an' you kin go skeetin', an' when they sez it gwine be cold you kin brile an egg in the sun. I'm gret mine to call you a w'ether bu'ro!"

CHAPTER XVIII

"Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?"

THE knowledge that Gertrude was not to marry Collins was a relief inexpressible to Morrison, yet relief only, not a cure. The sadness and loneliness of his life was the same, and his self-condemnation in no wise lessened.

He began again the task he had assigned himself the first days of their separation; he would not think of her at all. He would not stupefy his brain with drugs or drown his memories in drink. His little experience in the latter should suffice him forever, but he would fill his days so full of work that there would be no time left for musings; and in his leisure, by the sheer might of his will, he would banish her from his thoughts—again reverting to the power of will that was his.

But his scheming came to nothingness; his failure was as complete as it had been before, and he found himself, after the merest trial of his logic, helplessly yielding, as he had done all these years they had been apart, to thinking and dreaming of her, yea, planning ways to command *more* time in which to dream of her! Any little rumor that came to his ears regarding her, or mention of her name, any glimpse he caught of her on the street, was dwelt upon with a sad pleasure, and often made the subject of lengthy entries in his diary, or entries, though short, full of meaning, with much reading between the lines; and any news directly from her, though not intended for his ears, was given most grateful welcome.

Mr. Pindle, who had charge of the office floor at the house of Curtman & Co., hesitated one day when a man giving his name as Henry Burchell appeared at the head of the stairs, asking an interview with Mr. Curtman. Mr.

Burchell was not in rags, but his clothes, old and worn, betrayed such intimate relations with poverty, that Mr. Pindle concluded his business with the president was of more importance to Mr. Burchell than to the president, and, had he followed his own judgment, would have denied the interview. But it was Mr. Curtman's order—these days—that everybody asking an audience of him should have it; and so Mr. Burchell was shown into his writing room.

The man had an apologetic, embarrassed manner, but a straightforward look in his eyes. Morrison was sitting at his desk, but turned as he entered.

"This is Mr. Curtman? My name is Burchell."

"Walk in, Mr. Burchell," replied Morrison. "Be seated," he continued, motioning toward a chair.

"No, sir; I won't take up your time. I've

just come for work. I'm a poor man, an' I need help, but I want to earn it with work."

"That is commendable," Morrison replied.

"Here is a note from your wife."

"My wife! Did you say from my *wife?*" Morrison turned in his chair and looked at him intently.

Mr. Burchell felt a while in his pocket. "Here it is," he said at length.

Morrison caught it from his hand, and in a moment was devouring its contents. Were his eyes deceiving him!

"Dear Morrison," it ran, "this will be handed you by Mr. Burchell, Mrs. Turner's brother. He's in need, and out of employment. I know you will help him. I'll pay you with a thousand kisses.

"Ever with love, your wife,

"Gertrude."

There came to Morrison's face more than a smile, something deeper than joy—the look of the man to whom a pardon is brought while working away behind prison walls at a life-time sentence!

He arose. "When I come back," he said, turning toward the door.

"Wait, Mr. Curtman," called Mr. Burchell, apprehending his mistake, "that ain't a new note—I've had it for years."

"For years!" exclaimed Morrison, the light dying out of his eyes. "What do you mean? It is from my wife; I know her writing."

"Yes, I know, but she wrote it long ago—before the—partin'."

"Why did you bring it at all?"

"I'm sorry," said the man, reaching out his hand for the letter. "I was afeared it wasn't the right thing to do—but——"

"No, I will keep it; it is mine," said Curtman, tightening his hold on it—"it was

written to me. Why did you not bring it sooner?"

Here was indeed a dilemma for Mr. Burchell. Curtman had in one breath asked him why he had brought the note *at all,* in the next, why he had not brought it *sooner!*

He began an explanation, but stopped and waited patiently until he had Curtman's ear, for Curtman had again seated himself, and with his eyes fastened on the note before him was reading it over slowly word by word. This he did twice before turning to its bearer.

"How did you come by this, Mr. Burchell?" he asked at length. "How came she to give it to you?—when?"

"It was 'bout the time the Barber Shoe Factory closed down, an' I was out o' work. My sister, Mrs. Turner, was doin' odd jobs for Mrs. Curtman, an' she said she had a lot o' feelin' for the poor an' would get you to help me. You see, it was afore you an' she—

had—trouble. An' so I went to her home an' stated my case, an' she says, 'Certainly, Mr. Burchell; I know Mr. Curtman will help you,' an' with that she sets down an' writes you this note. But when I got back home that day I foun' that Mr. Scott, who use to be foreman at the Barber Shoe Company, had gone into another bis'ness, an' had sent for me to come get a place, which I did. An' that place lasted till two months ago. So I jest puts away this note, an' last night my wife, she sez to me, 'If I was you, I'd take that 'round to Mr. Curtman, an' see ef he wouldn't pay 'tention to it yit an' help you. Maybe he will; an' eny way it won't hurt.'"

"I'm glad you brought it to me, Mr. Burchell, and I shall certainly help you."

"Thank you. I'm a thousand times obleeged to you. It goes mighty hard with a poor man when he is out o' a job. But your wife—I don't mean your wife, of course; I

mean, Mrs. Curtman—she has been that kind to me! It makes me feel like laughin' all over when I talk 'bout it. Mrs. Curtman certainly has done a good part by me an' my poor little boy with the spine disease; it looks like she can't do enuff for him. She's goin' to take him to the hospital an' pay all the bills, doctors' bills an' everything. I wanted to name him for her, but it wouldn't do to call him Gertrude, him bein' a boy——"

"And so you gave him—my name?"

"Yes, but he ain't name for you—he's name for her. I'll tell you how 'twuz: the boy had got to be four or five year old an' we had never called him any name more'n Bud. An' I sez to Mrs. Curtman, 'I'm goin' to name this boy for you,' an' she laugh an' say, 'You goin' to call him Gertrude'!" I didn't know what to say then. But she help me out; she sez, 'Call him Curtman—that is my name.' An' she take his pore little han' in her'n an' pat his

curly head an' say, 'Little Curtman shan't want for nuthin' as long as he live.' An' the boy smile like his back didn't hurt him no more——"

Mr. Burchell paused and looked out of the window. After he had wiped his eyes on his coat sleeve he began again: "Yes——"

"Nor as long as I live shall he want," interrupted Morrison. "Go to Stapleton," he continued, turning to Mr. Burchell; "he has charge of our storerooms. Tell him that I sent you to him to be given work, if he has it, and if he hasn't it, to make work for you. You tell him this now, and later I will see him myself concerning it."

That night Morrison sat long before retiring, with the note open in his hand, reading again and again the closing words, "Ever with love, your wife, Gertrude."

He made several entries in his diary, but erased them of which a word here and there

remaining, betrayed the trend of his thoughts. But one was left in its entirety, a verse to which he added no comment of his own.

> "Dear as remembered kisses after death
> And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
> On lips that are for others; deep as love,
> Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,
> O, Death in Life, the days that are no more."

The same night Gertrude sat penning a letter of sympathy to a friend in the midst of a fresh grief, who had before gone through many and deep distresses:

"It may be given us to know even in this life," it ran, "what good our sorrows have wrought in, and for us, but whether or not this come to pass, we can rest assured our 'heavenly Father' sends, or allows, none but those that accomplish some good end. Moreover, it has been said if we but properly bore our crosses, they would be no more in our way, or a hin-

drance, than sails to a ship—or wings to a bird. But no matter which, joy or grief, it will all be over soon, and it is only our concern to do well while here the work that has been put in our hands. I close, dear friend, quoting from Brooke a passage of strength and beauty that will doubtless appeal to you as it has appealed to me, nor will you likely overlook, though it maybe but a minor strain in the song, 'When all is over here'!

"'Go forth to meet the solemnities and to conquer the trials of existence, believing in a Shepherd of your souls. Then faith in Him will support you in duty . . . till at last, when all is over here, and the noise and strife of the earthly battle fades upon your dying ear, and you hear, instead thereof, the deep and musical sound of the ocean of eternity, and see the light of heaven shining on its waters still and fair in their radiant rest, your faith will raise the song of conquest, and in its

retrospect of the life which has ended and its forward glance upon the life to come, take up the poetic inspiration of the Hebrew king, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"!'"

CHAPTER XIX

"Out of the past remembered eyes
  Pursue and hold me fast;
Their dark pure splendor never dies
Out of the past."

. . . . .

"Would the serene,
Sweet face of Nature steal between
This grief and me, to dull its pain?"

THE business of the house about this time required the presence of someone a while in Central America. Curtman saw this; moreover, knew that he was the man for the journey, and went. His health had been so poor of late that he did not fight against this absence, hoping for good results from the balmy air and Caribbean breezes. He had lost many pounds of his usual weight, and from an athlete in strength, had come to be sometimes of uncertain gait from sheer exhaustion.

The business complications he found, on reaching Costa Rica, were not difficult of adjustment. Morrison seemed gifted with the adjusting ability. Whether his practice came from the best of motives, irrespective of results, or because he noted that good results always followed the practice, he was uniformly liberal in his contracts. He always had the best labor procurable and paid for it better price than was elsewhere paid. And there was not a man in his employ who did not know that the prosperity of the company was a guarantee of his own, that he was identified with the enterprise, a part of the whole, and that in putting forth his best efforts to achieve success for the company, he was doing his best work for himself.

Morrison, on looking into the trouble on reaching Costa Rica, saw at a glance its root, and in a little while the disputes were settled to the satisfaction of all concerned; not only

this, but improvements of various kinds were made and the business was broadened and made more secure than it had ever been.

How in the good old days he would have hastened to Gertrude to tell her of this just and amicable settlement, and how pleased would she have been with the happy ending, brought about by peaceful methods—methods so accordant with the principles by which she lived!

Indeed, Morrison's nature seemed to be getting more in sympathy with peaceful methods. Somehow, of late he had been thinking more of the relative values of the here, and the hereafter, of, "the things which are seen," and "the things which are not seen." He was ceasing to ignore, as he had so many years ignored, the ethics taught him at his mother's knee; the perfunctory was falling off from duty, and the beauty of the duties was itself becoming more apparent. He had a kindly heart—good

soil for what was long ago planted in it, yet to grow and bear fruit.

It is given to mortal man to endure both pain and sorrow, but not yet to understand their ministry; but a ministry they surely have, and that ministry is good. Pain is often but the prelude of peace, and sorrow of serenity.

> "Say not 'Twas all in vain.
> The anguish, and the darkness, and the strife,
> Love thrown upon the waters, comes again,
> In quenchless yearning for a nobler life."

But the warm atmosphere and salt air did not prove as medicinal as Curtman had hoped, and the ailment—whatever it was—that he carried away with him he brought back, little, if at all, lessened. But he made no moan; as Jerry expressed it, he tried to step along as he always had, and he continued unbroken his work-a-day life, with as much of his old-time energy as he could summon. There was a great deal of work at the house that required

his personal attention; for though he had in drill a young man of the firm, preparing him for his substitute in emergencies, the young man was at present only able to assist him, not to carry his whole burden.

"You have attended to this end of the line admirably, Preston," he said to this assistant, after looking over the entries and correspondence of the weeks he had been absent; "it seems as if your shoulders were growing broad for a burden about to be laid on them. After a little more drilling, I believe you can take my place altogether if I go off on a longer journey."

"I don't know about that, Mr. Curtman; I hardly think I could. But you are not going off on another journey, are you?"

Morrison, when he spoke, had in mind the long journey from which no traveler returns; but, saving a significant smile which Preston understood, made no further explanation. He

would not be a second Mr. Weston, he said to himself, recalling the elder partner of the firm in which he had been employed in his youth, who was always making promises, in a mysterious way, of taking his departure, which promises he had never kept, and was still living along, at work at that, a hearty, hale octogenarian.

"It is well," kept on Curtman, in a matter-of-fact way, "for one to keep his business always in ship-shape, ready for any emergency. I have come to think the emergency of life is quite as important as the emergency of death. . . . I detest slipshod methods, if indeed, method can be thought of at all in connection with slipshod. I believe the best results can be obtained by adopting, and rigidly adhering to system—of course a good system. My beau ideal of a business was one I saw once so conducted, and with only one man at its head.

"Now, I have greatly enjoyed owning the lion's share of this business, not so much on account of the lion's share of the dividends I received as the right it insured me to control it—to run it as I pleased.

"But my views are somewhat modified now. I have come to set more value on an assistant, a lieutenant I will call him, a man who understands and is in accord with the chief's views. Why," continued Morrison, and not lowering his voice either, "if I had listened to these narrow-minded malcontents, who happily own only a few shares of stock, there's no telling when, or how, the trouble in Costa Rica would have been settled. I did not *have* to take their advice and I did *not* take it. But it is well, as I said, for the president of a business which he practically owns, to have associated with him an assistant, (now I don't mean a vice-president, for I have more of them now than I need), in accord with his views, who can run it

on in the same groove should the president lay off for a rest, go abroad, or die.

"Now, to wind up my address, I will say to you, that I want you for this office. I have been observant of your qualifications, and believe you are just the man I need. Your generous views have made you sometimes unpopular with the directors, I know, but not with me."

"I certainly feel flattered, Mr. Curtman," Mr. Preston replied, "and you can rest assured I am grateful. I don't know how such a practical compliment as this will suit the others, but what you say *goes,* both I and they know that. But if you give me this promotion, I shall try to do, to the best of my ability, my duty by both you and them."

Preston kept his word and proved a most useful and valuable assistant, and surely his appointment was most opportune.

The late spring, with its chilly breezes, sud-

denly turned into an early and warm summer, and with the heat of this early summer came weariness and lassitude to those who, from either age or sickness, were no longer stout in body and strong of limb.

When Morrison returned to the city, he returned also to his nightly reveries at the window, from which he could see across the intervening gloom the glow of Gertrude's lamp, and it was well for him, indeed, that it was always lighted, for he was in no condition now to walk the weary squares between to learn the meaning of an absence from its place.

His musings now were sweeter to him than ever; he could not explain it, but somehow they had lost the bitterness that had heretofore enwrapped them. He had himself lost Gertrude; he sadly accepted this, but had the happiness of knowing she would never be another's.

As he sat one night at the window, in a calmer, sweeter meditation than any he had heretofore known, the lamp in the distance continually swam and disappeared before him; he wiped his eyes; it came back with its soft, pure rays, only to disappear again. Why resist?—they were a relief, these tears, and so he let them have their way: "The ice-bound clod is broken."

It was a balmy night and the windows were open. He could hear distinctly the music in the near-by church, sometimes the voice of the minister. The organ's tones had never seemed so human before—a cry of penitence; a shout of triumph; and a sigh of peace. After a few chords of prelude, there came to his ears, like the notes of a heavenward soaring lark, the song of a clear, sweet contralto:

> "Call and the Saviour will hear thee,
> He on his bosom will bear thee,
> Thou who art weary of sin."

The song was over. There was a silence; and then he heard the minister repeating the words of Christ:

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Curtman closed his eyes and thought, in calm content, thoughts of kindliness and peace to all mankind. He must have slept, too, for he felt on his brow "the touch of that vanished hand, and heard once more the sound of that voice he had stilled."

He was wakened by some noise in the hall. It was Jerry, with his low, continuous hum, going about his last duties for the night; it must be later than he had thought. He essayed rising, to go to his room, but found he must have assistance.

"Jerry," he said, when his humble friend in the course of his rounds reached him, "you will have to help me; I am ill."

"Yes, Boss, you suttenly is sick; you'se es

white es a sheet. Let me call Mr. Stanton or the hedd chuck——"

"No. Do as I tell you, Jerry. I want no scene, or commotion around me. You can do all I want, and I know you are willing. Call a carriage and take me to the hospital—the hospital nearest my old home. You understand?"

"Yes, Boss; an' I kin take jest as good kerr uv you es eny uv the res' uv 'em, an' am willin'er than enybody, but I jest tho't they might blame me ef I didn't tell 'em—they white an' me black."

Jerry did not overrate his willingness to take care of his white friend; had all the guests in the hotel been apprised of Curtman's illness—and Curtman was popular with them—this sable servitor would still have been abreast in the amount and genuineness of his sympathy.

In a little while the carriage had arrived,

and Jerry, with a tact and management that would have elicited Morrison's admiration, if he had been well enough to observe, was engineering his removal to the hospital.

CHAPTER XX

"——There is a love beside
Whose strength the passion of the ocean wide
Is like the ripples whispering in blue bays:
A love beside whose strength death's fingers wild
Are weak as pink soft fingers of a child."

. . . . .

"For love is purer than dew drops are,
The winds go never so wide and far."

WHEN they reached the institution, Jerry left Morrison in the carriage while he went in—an *avant coureur*—to arrange for his reception. Once in the office, he went about his work in no uncertain, or half-hearted way. He announced to the superintendent and those standing about him, that Mr. Morrison Curtman was ill in a carriage without, in quest of such home and attention as they could give, informing them at the same time that Mr. Curtman was the best man in the city, an aris-

tocrat of the highest rank—a high stepper, he called him—and as for money, he had it by the bankfuls.

Whether or not this representation of the ill gentleman at the door, would have met with a warm, and immediate response from Jerry's introduction alone, cannot be stated, as the superintendent knew Mr. Curtman personally, and was glad that the best room in the house was vacant and ready for his occupancy. He went down himself to the carriage to supplement, if necessary, Jerry's strength in getting him to his room.

"This suttenly do look puer an' clean in heyr," said Jerry, surveying in turn the spotless bed and soft-tinted walls of the room after they had reached it and Morrison sat resting a while before retiring.

"What direction, Jerry, is home from here? Go to the window and see."

"The hotel, Boss?"

"No, no—I mean Miss Gertrude's home. Can you see it? and her lamp——?"

"Yes," said Jerry, pointing to the right as he stood at the open window; "tharr it all is—an' the lamp, it's a-burnin'. Miss Gertrue's lamp allus 'minds me uv the lights they has 'long the lake side fer the boats ter cum home by." . . .

The following day Morrison sat up intermittently, but the next he kept a-bed. But the physicians spoke hopefully of his case, and led him to look for good results from their treatment. But he needed rest now, they said, —that the hospital was the place for him, and that he had come none too soon. They said he must stay, contentedly, until he had fully recuperated; that the convalescence might be long—that the running down in health was something easily and quickly done, but the ascending was often slow and tedious.

Curtman admitted the logic, and for a while

was quiet and contented, but grew restless when the days dragged into weeks and he found himself no better, indeed, worse.

"Curtman's is a strange case," said Dr. Lawson to Dr. Bass one day, as they talked over the patients in the office. "There seems to be no serious malady, no organic trouble, and yet——"

"He's going down."

"Yes, he's going down."

"Our probe can't reach everything."

"No; indeed, *no*. And this is one of the cases, I'm free to admit, in which I can use neither probe nor knife. I can't see the *wound* it made, and I don't know *where* to cut for the bullet—but it's there."

"Yes, as you say, it's there, but we can't find it. He has worked hard in building up his business, he has spared neither time nor strength. He's a millionaire, it's true, but he has paid dearly for his money, if it has

brought him here to end his days, comparatively a young man. And then, too, he had trouble with his wife. You've heard of that, of course?"

"Yes, I know, and my diagnosis is, *that* trouble occasioned this—that *that* was the bullet, and it lodged in his heart."

"That may be. She has been here a good deal of late, in fact, ever since she brought the little child to be treated for spinal disease. What a woman she is, to be sure! That child is from a home of poverty and our poorest apartments would be luxurious to him, yet she ordered for him our brightest room and the best of everything, and pays for it."

One afternoon Curtman was unusually restless, and for no apparent reason; the nurse had not been lacking in her attentions, in fact, that day had been more than usually assiduous. She had beaten and placed the pillows to suit him again and again; had raised and

lowered the blinds at his bidding; kept wide open the door, and yet he was in no wise quieted.

"I think I will give you a powder, Mr. Curtman," she said at length.

"No, no, do not drug me," he pleaded; "let me keep my mind to the last—I will be quiet," and by a strong effort of his will, he straightened himself on his couch and lay with his eyes closed, as still as if asleep.

Presently there were voices in the hall at the farther end.

"Who is that in the hall?" he asked. "I hear a woman's voice. Look; see who it is and tell me."

"I see one of the nurses and a—visitor," she reported, after a hasty glance at the approaching figures.

"Who is the visitor?" he asked, leaning upon his elbow and looking intently at the nurse. "I thought I knew the voice——"

The nurse hesitated; she knew Mr. Curtman had been divorced from his wife.

He fastened his eyes on the strip of hall his open door revealed. In another instant Gertrude, and the woman with whom she was talking were passing.

"Gertrude!" he called.

His voice was weak. She was not sure, but it seemed to her that she heard Morrison calling her.

"Gertrude—Gertrude!"

This time she was sure. The blood came in a tide to her cheeks.

"I hear Mr. Curtman calling me," she said. "Where is he?"

"In the room you have just passed," said the nurse.

She turned back and entered.

"Oh, Gertrude, Gertrude!" he cried, holding out to her his hands. "You won't mind coming to me now—now that I am dying! It

will be easier to die if I know that you have forgiven me—could you forgive me?"

"I have long ago forgiven you," she said, leaning over and laying her hand on his brow.

He caught it in his and pressed it hungrily to his cheeks and lips.

"And you must not talk of dying," she said, leaving her hand to his caresses, and speaking brokenly such words as she could command. He heard the sob in her voice and felt her tears on his face.

"Oh, I hope that I shall not die—not now. Pray God that I may live, Gertrude—life is so sweet now that I have your forgiveness. And may be—some day—the love you had for me—you will find again."

"I have it now—I have it always with me. It was never lost," and leaning down she pressed her lips to his in a long, tender kiss, unpoisoned by a single bitter memory.

The following day when Gertrude came,

Morrison handed her the marriage license. He was silent, his hand trembled, and a blush of shame crimsoned his cheeks and brow. She read it unmoved; her face was calm and her voice sweet.

"This is a form with which we will comply," she said simply, "a mere form, for we were never *un*married."

He essayed to speak—his voice failed him, but he clasped tightly the hands he had taken in his, and looked steadily into her eyes the pent-up love that needed no words for expression.

"And you will come with me," she said; "my home must be your home."

"Yes," he said, "your home shall be my home, 'and thy God my God,'" he added reverently.

Morrison's recovery was wonderfully rapid. Dr. Lawson, in speaking of it to Dr. Bass, congratulated him on his acumen. "Your

diagnosis was correct, Bass," he said, "Curtman's trouble was in the heart; you rightly located that bullet."

"Oh, yes, I located it," he answered, "but I didn't remove it; neither you nor I did *that.*" . . .

Years later, while Gertrude was walking through the Christians' Orphanage, in which from its inception she had taken great interest, and to whose endowment Curtman had furnished a large sum, she saw, walking in the grounds, accompanied by a retinue of children, a woman whose limping gait and frail, bowed form fastened her attention.

"That woman," replied the superintendent in answer to her query, "is a very useful member of our force. She does the mending for the children and teaches them to sew. She accepts no salary, save her board and clothes, and these last, you see, are very simple—just those of a sick nurse. She says it is a good place to

live—among the children, and certainly a good place to die. She loves the children and they love her, and we shall all miss her when she goes. She can't live long, the doctors say; she has never recovered from the hurt that left on her cheek that scar."

Gertrude looked again—there was something familiar in the face and figure. Yes, she had rightly surmised; it was Helen Landray.

THE END

The UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

AT HOME AND WITH

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